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AFTER YEARS.

BY EMMA ALICE BROWNE.

Sweet, arise! The day is breaking
On the long, long night of pain,
And the soul within me, waking,
Dares to love and hope again!
Under that red flush of glory
Life and light for us begin—
Yonder summits, dim and hoary,
Shut our world of sorrow in.

Lo! the past is past forever,
Let its soulless ashes lie
Where its nameless grave shall never
Vex the golden by and by!
We, in erring, have repented;
Let no boding grief be thine,
Though the shattered cup *is* scented
With the revel's wasted wine.

Here, with dark distrust behind us,
Love's mistake that wrought our woe,
Let no lingering cloud remind us
Of the wreck of long ago;
In the darkness, dim and dimmer,
Drops the gray life that hath been—
Yonder morning's rosy glimmer
Shuts our land of promise in.

While the shadows fade and falter
On those parted paths of ours,
Here, upon this festal altar
Of the sunshine and the flowers,
Hand in hand let us together
Plight the troth we dared to break-
Still, in calm or stormy weather,
To be true for Truth's sweet sake!

Swear—that never, while the mornings
Put the evil nights to rout,
Or the sunset's lurid warnings
Fire the world, shall coward Doubt
Dim our rosy heaven of passion
With the twilight of eclipse—
Swear! And, love, in lover's fashion,
Seal the oath upon my lips!

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THE RIVAL SISTERS.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. MACON'S MISTAKE.

Macon had thought it best to return to the Brown farm, and he passed the greater portion of the night between his two patients; but toward morning he had slept, while his student watched. Shortly after daylight he set out for the village, where a cold bath and a strong cup of coffee restored to him all his usual vigor and acuteness.

He came out to the Elms with his mind made up to aid Mrs. Blake in every possible manner to carry out the scheme she had developed on the previous night. He felt sure of Hester now, and the thought of the brilliant fortune she would win with so little apparent risk, was too great a temptation to be resisted by one with so little principle as he possessed.

The gilded bait had been greedily swallowed, and he drove to Mrs. Blake's in great glee over the news he had to communicate. She received him as cordially as he had a right to expect in the character of her accepted son-in-law, and in reply to her inquiries concerning Mr. Landry and his daughter, said:

"They are no better; though of course you hardly expected they would be. Mr. Landry complains of no pain this morning; but that is a fatal symptom for a man in his condition. Mortification has set in, and a few hours of ease are purchased at the sacrifice of life. I have honestly done all that I could for him, as Simcox will testify, if it ever becomes necessary; but the case was hopeless from the first. By this time to-morrow morning he will no longer be numbered among the living."

"His mind is clear, I hope."

"Yes—perfectly so; and he awaits the arrival of Hester with impatience. I promised him that she should be with him by seven o'clock, and remain with him to the end."

"And the daughter? What report have you to give of her?"

"A favorable one for the success of our plans," he replied, in a very guarded tone. "She lies in a comatose state, and notices nothing that passes around her. I do not think her condition dangerous, so far as life is concerned, which is as well for us; but the best part of life, perception and intelligence, are dead for her, unless I choose to use my skill to restore them."

"Hester will decide as to that; and here she comes now, to answer for herself. Until she has seen her father, she will not pledge herself to anything. If Mr. Landry will make her rich without this risk, she thinks it better to accept what he may offer; but you may feel assured that she will act with us in the end. She is too ambitious to give up such a chance as we are ready to afford her."

Hester came in with her hat on, and a light shawl thrown over her shoulders. She smiled as brightly on her lover as if he had been all the world to her, and put up her lips to be kissed with the sweetest air of affectionate submission imaginable.

"Good-morning, Julian," she said, in her most dulcet tones. "I hope you will give me credit for my punctuality. It wants two minutes to six by the clock, and I am quite ready to go with you. I hope that your patients are doing as well as we could wish."

"Yes; I think they are doing *that*," he replied, with a meaning smile. "Nothing will stand in the way of complete success to our great plan, if you elect to follow it up; but we will say no more of that till after you have seen your father."

She playfully touched his lips with the rosy tips of her fingers, and warningly said:

"Speak of him as my uncle, if you please. It will be safer to guard against a slip of the tongue. Shall we go now?"

"I have something to say to your mother first. I talked with Mrs. Brown last night, and I find that this was the day fixed on for the removal of herself and her husband. The greater part of their furniture has been sent away already, and the beds on which the sick are lying were to go with their owners to-day. I have purchased them at twice their value, and I have ordered a table and a few chairs to be sent from the village. The old man and his wife were quite delighted when I told them that you are related to their guest and his daughter, and that it is your purpose to go thither and take charge of them. Brown is quite willing to give up the house to you till the new owner comes, and the old couple will set out on their westward journey this morning, on the ten o'clock train. The dumb girl you spoke of had better be sent over as soon as possible to assist Hester in taking care of our invalids."

"I have already sent a message to her by Müller, and I am looking for her every moment," said Mrs. Blake. "As soon as the man has had his breakfast, I will dispatch him to the village for a carriage, and I will come out to the Brown farm myself, bringing Eunice with me, and also such delicacies as sick people need. Hester can take charge of Mr. Landry, and I will attend to his daughter. That will be a fair division of labor."

"I find that you are quite equal to the occasion, Mrs. Blake," replied Macon, with a shrewd smile. "With Brown and his wife gone, the coast is clear for us, at any rate. You are not looking well this morning, and I recommend you to take something more stimulating than coffee to brace your nerves for what lies before you to-day. Come, Hester; I am at your service now."

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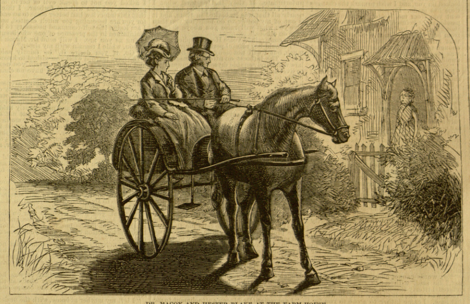

DR. MACON AND HESTER BLAKE AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

In a few more moments they were driving rapidly away through the fresh and dewy morning, each one too much occupied with thought to say much. The country through which the road wound was broken, and at some points picturesque; but the two who sat so near, yet really so far apart in feeling, had neither eyes nor thought for the beauties of nature on that soft summer morning. Hester was speculating on the chances that lay before her, and Macon was dreaming of the happy time to come when she would be all his own. He believed that his generosity had at last won his reward, and that the heart of his idol had warmed to him with something akin to the passion he cherished for her. The kiss she had voluntarily offered him yet thrilled upon his lips, and he drove on with no consciousness of anything in heaven or earth but that Hester was beside him—that the brief journey they were making together was but a type of the long and blissful one they would undertake when the fate of Mr. Landry was settled, and a sufficient provision from his estate secured to her. That she would marry him in any event he did not doubt; for was not she and her mother so completely in his power, after what had passed on the previous night, that she would not dare to recoil from the fulfillment of the pledges she had given him? He could not bear to think of owing anything to *fear*, yet he was resolute to hold her through that, if other means failed. She *should* be his—willingly, he hoped—but under any circumstances she should not evade the destiny she had accepted with apparent good faith.

Hester tried not to remember him: she wished to fix her thoughts on the important interview which approached, and to make up her mind as to which would be best for herself—independence in a foreign land, unshackled by any ties, or great wealth attained through crime, and shared with Macon.

The money allured her, but the lover repelled, and she wondered if she could keep on the mask till her interests were secure, should she elect to take the place of that sister to whom she gave not one emotion of pity. Estelle's fate was to be pronounced by *her*—her mother had said so; and the man beside her was to use his skill not to cure, but to hold that benighted one in a state of mental darkness, should she decide to put forth her hand and grasp the inheritance that lawfully belonged to the sick girl. It was a stupendous piece of wickedness, yet there was something in its conception, and the measures to be taken to carry it into effect, that had a hideous fascination for this girl. But for the necessity of accepting Dr. Macon after their plans were accomplished, Hester would not have hesitated a moment as to her own course. She had no scruples of conscience, for that was something her mother had thought it best not to cultivate, in the impressible years in which her child was as wax in her hands.

They at length reached the hollow in which lay the house they were going to; it was a sombre spot, to which the rays of the morning sun had scarcely yet penetrated. High hills, from which bowlders of granite cropped forth, arose on every side save one, and the few fields that were fit for cultivation lay in the low ground around the house.

That was a wooden cottage of one story, containing four rooms, with doors opening into them from the yard. Two large trees stood in front of it, and their heavy foliage seemed to add to the gloom of the surroundings. A quarter of a mile from the entrance to this little nook was the scene of the accident of the previous day, but by making a slight detour, Dr. Macon avoided it.

During the latter portion of the drive he had spoken eloquently and forcibly of his love and his hopes, and in spite of Mrs. Blake's assurance that Hester would ultimately act with them, he endeavored to draw from her some pledge as to the course she intended to pursue. Finding her still uncertain as to her decision, he said:

"If you accept the provision your father offers, there will be no obstacle to our immediate marriage, and I shall expect to claim you before another month rolls by. We will go West on a bridal tour; and if you like Cincinnati, I will make a location there, and with the assistance of some friends I have in that place, I think I can soon establish myself in a good practice. Your mother shall live with us, of course; we shall have the means of making a good appearance till I can begin to add something to our resources, and I shall be very grateful to you, Hester, for affording me a wider field of action than this little town presents. I have vegetated here in the hope that I could save enough to enable me to accomplish plans I have long thought of, little dreaming that the solution of all my difficulties would come to me in so charming a form as the woman I adore, holding in her hand the dower that will become the foundation of future prosperity."

Had Hester felt the faintest feeling of regard for the speaker, the prospect thus held out would have been an alluring one, and she must have turned from the dark path on which she was tempted to set out. But she thrilled with repulsion at the thought of a speedy union with him, and he had unconsciously given her a new motive for acceding to the nefarious proposal of her mother. If she decided to assume the position of Estelle Landry, several months must elapse before the marriage could take place, and in the interim some means of escape might be found.

But Macon must not suspect what was passing in her mind, so she turned to him, with her bright smile, and said:

"You almost tempt me to accept whatever my father may choose to offer me. I think I should like to live in the great West, and I have heard that Cincinnati is a very pleasant city. But we can talk no more nonsense now, for here we are at the end of our journey, and I must prepare myself to meet my unfortunate father."

"You must pass through a painful ordeal, my love; but hope and happiness lie beyond it," he said, as he drew up in front of the little gate that opened into the yard.

"Yes; but not for me, if life is to be shared with you," thought Hester, as she accepted his hand and lightly sprang to the ground.

At the sound of approaching wheels, Mrs. Brown came from the house to greet the guest she had been on the look-out for. She was an insignificant looking woman, with a dull face, and preoccupied air. She was wrinkled, old, and toil-worn, and Hester almost shuddered as her horny hand grasped her own, and her monotonous voice said:

"I'm very glad you've come, Miss Blake, for my old man is off to town, and he told me to follow him with Dr. Macon, as he was good enough to promise to take me there. Brown'll go to the man that bought the place, and tell him how it is that you've to stay in it till the gentleman dies, and the gal can be took away."

Hester drew her hand away, and hastily said:

"I have no doubt it will all be right, Mrs. Brown. Dr. Macon must stay here with me till my mother comes, but Mr. Simcox can take you away as soon as you like. He is here, I believe."

"O yes; he's in there. It don't make no difference to me who takes me to town, so I git there in time to see some o' the people I know afore the train comes."

"You can leave this as soon as you like, Mrs. Brown," said Macon. "I will speak to Simcox, and tell him to take you wherever you wish to go. One of us must stay with the sick, and as I am better acquainted with Miss Blake than he is, it will be best for me to remain."

"It's no differ to me, Doctor—you or him, it's all the same. I'll take the young lady in to see the sick gal, and leave her there while I git myself ready to go."

Macon nodded, and the three walked up the yard and drew near the open door of the room in which lay the unfortunate young creature against whom such dire treachery was meditated.

As Macon had said, the apartment was perfectly bare of furniture, with the exception of the bed, and a single chair which stood beside it. But Hester scarcely noted the desolate aspect of the place; all her attention was absorbed by the still figure that lay motionless, as if carved of marble.

Yes; the resemblance to herself was marvellous. The same delicately cut features, the same turn of the head; even the hand that was thrown on the coverlet was a perfect copy of her own, and she triumphantly thought that it would be no difficult matter to personate Estelle Landry, if she should find it to her interest to do so.

While speaking with Mrs. Brown in the yard, Hester had kept her vail drawn over her face, but when she threw it back and stood looking down on the sick girl, the old woman peered at her, and exclaimed:

"La sakes! who ever saw the like? If I didn't know better, I'd think you was the sick one come to life agin. You're as like as two peas."

"We are nearly related, Mrs. Brown, so the likeness is not wonderful. This young lady is my cousin, and her father is my uncle," said Hester, with perfect composure. "She seems very ill, and will require the best nursing to bring her through. I have no doubt, however, that Dr. Macon's skill will soon restore her."

Mrs. Brown shook her head dubiously.

"Doctors can't do everything. She's young and strong, and mebbe she'll come out'n it all right, but it don't look much like it now. I'd like to stay, if I could, and see how the poor thing gits on; but we ha'n't got nothing comfortable about us, and my old man wouldn't hear to it. He's just wild to git away to our Peter, who's been away to Ohio for the last five year."

"We will take the best care of your patient, Mrs. Brown—that is, my mother and myself, for she is coming out to stay with me; and if you wish it, I will write to you and let you know how my cousin fares in our hands."

"Oh, thank you, Miss. I shall be glad to know, for the poor thing was so pretty spoken when she came to herself, a little while afore she fell into that deep sleep, that I felt my heart warm to her. If you'd drap me a line at Toledo, Ohio, to the care of Peter Brown, it will come to me safe, and I'll be glad to know the end of it all."

"I will send you more than a line, Mrs. Brown," said Hester sweetly. "I shall be sure to write you all the particulars that can be interesting to you."

"I'm sure I shall be much obleeged; and now I'll go and get on my things. I don't want to keep Mr. Simcox a waiting on me."

While this conversation was passing, Dr. Macon had gone into the adjoining room to ascertain the condition of Mr. Landry. He found him sleeping lightly, and he whispered to young Simcox to accompany him into the yard, where he could speak with him without danger of arousing the patient.

He arose with alacrity, for any change was welcome to him from the dull room in which he had passed so many hours. When he understood that he was to accompany Mrs. Brown to the village, the youth was quite elated; for he was but a novice in the profession he had chosen, and the suffering he had been called on to witness, had depressed him to that degree that he began to think the calling of a physician by no means as desirable as he had once believed it.

"I am very glad to go, Macon," he said, "and I would be still better pleased, if I did not have to come back again, to see that poor fellow die. He's bound to go, you know; all we can do can't help him now; I know enough to understand that. I'll get used to that sort of thing, I suppose; but you see I'm not broke in to it yet, and it makes me feel downhearted to see a man in the prime of life done to death like that. It's an infernal shame, that's what it is; and if I had my way, I'd hang somebody every time we have a railroad smash. It's the only way to put a stop to them."

"Perhaps so, but I haven't time to discuss that now. You need not come back, if you had rather not. Mrs. Blake is coming here to take care of her brother-in-law, and we shall remove Miss Landry to her cottage as soon as we think it will be safe. In the mean time Mrs. Blake will have her daughter and a competent girl to assist her. If I should need you, I will let you know, but of that there is little prospect. The young lady is doing very well, and she will be sufficiently recovered to go to her friends in a few days."

"Why, I thought there was concussion of the brain; that her condition was considered critical. Wasn't that your opinion last evening?"

"I apprehended something of the sort, but this morning she is so much better that I have dismissed such fears. She sleeps heavily, but that is the result of the opiate I administered. The head was slightly injured, but when she wakes she will be out of all danger."

The student looked bewildered, but he had unbounded respect for his principal, and he did not know enough himself to enable him to understand the case. He had merely looked in on Miss Landry a few times, in the absence of Macon, to see how Mrs. Brown was doing her duty, but he had not made any examination of her condition. He only said:

"I am glad to hear you say that, and of course you know best. I'll get my hat, and be off with the old lady. If you should need me, you can send for me, you know."

"Yes; but you had better stay in the office, and attend to such calls as may be made. No one must be sent after me, for I must give up the next twenty-four hours to those who need me here. You can send the carriage back, and I will be on the look-out for the man that brings it."

"I will do the best I can. If anybody is sick enough to call me in, I'll give them bread pills, and *they* can't hurt, any way. I won't kill any one by malpractice if I can help it."

"Nonsense, Sim. You understand the treatment of fevers well enough, and at this season there is not much else the matter with people. Blue mass and quinine will bring all out right; but the secret of my success is, that I use very little of either."

"Well, I'm not going to dose people much with things I shouldn't like to take myself, so I think I shall follow your example, and make myself a popular physician. Here comes the old lady, so I'll go in and get my hat."

In a few more moments the two were driving away, and Macon laughed softly to himself, as he muttered:

"That verdant youth places implicit faith in everything I say to him. He will never make a doctor, for he has not the clairvoyance which enables a medical man to form an accurate idea of the case he has to treat. He knows even less than I thought, or he would not have accepted my dictum as to the condition of that poor girl in there. He will tell what I want told in the town, and that will prepare the way for the first act in the drama, if Hester decides on performing it in the character assigned her by her mother. Clever woman that! but I don't know that I care about having her always near me in the character of my mother-in-law. If Hester takes her sister's place, the old lady must keep a respectful distance to avoid suspicion, and I really think it will be best to take all we can get, and leave Mrs. Blake to watch over the helpless charge we will leave on her hands."

Ruminating thus, he walked slowly toward the house, and went in, to find Mr. Landry still sleeping and Hester watching beside her sister.

She looked up at him and asked, in a low tone:

"Can I go in to my father? Is he prepared to receive me?"

"Not yet—he sleeps; but it will not be long now before you can go to him. I have arranged affairs in such a way that if we carry out the plan proposed by your mother, no suspicion can arise. Your father and sister are entirely at your mercy, Hester. With a little management you can step into the place of this helpless girl, and in all probability she will never recover sufficiently to understand or care for the loss she will sustain. Her case is more hopeless than I at first thought; she may regain bodily health, but the mental faculties will scarcely react. It will be no wrong to *her*, if you do assume her position, and it seems almost a pity that you should give up what you can so easily claim."

Hester eagerly asked:

"Are you quite sure? If she would be an idiot at any rate, what difference will it make to her if I do assume her place? I feel sorry for her, now that I have seen her, and I was thinking when you came in that we would nurse her back to health, and let her go unharmed. But if what you say is true, where would be the use of that? If she is unfit to fill her place in the world, I may as well assume it; but I should like to be quite certain that such is the fact, Dr. Macon."

"I think that you may rely on my judgment in such a case as this," he replied, with perfect composure. "Affections of the brain have been my peculiar study, and I cannot be mistaken as to the indications in the present case. You may believe me when I tell you that you will be safe from all interference on the part of your unfortunate sister. All my skill can never restore her to mental health. She will arise from her bed again, and live healthy, and move as others do, but the power of thought will never again be hers."

Hester covered her face with her hands, and remained silent several moments. When she again looked up she was very pale, and she said, more as if speaking to herself than to him:

"That is a terrible doom! so young, so fair! to be cast down to nothingness in a brief moment of time! Death had been better—death, *death*, much as we shrink from it."

"Yes—for her, but not for you," he softly said. "If she had been killed at once, we could never have given you the position to which you are entitled as your father's eldest daughter. As it is, you can claim and hold it without injury to her, for she will be incapable of enjoying the wealth that you can use to some purpose."

She passionately replied:

"You wish me then to claim this fortune? Are you in league with my mother to drive me on to this wickedness? I warn you that if I perpetrate it, it will not be the only evil deed of my life. Having once tasted crime, I shall not stop there. I shall be capable of doing things that you, with your cool reason and colder blood, would never dream of as possible. Don't tempt me, Julian Macon, for you will have bitter cause to rue it, if I do what my mother wishes."

She was violently excited, though she never raised her voice above a thrilling whisper. Macon regarded her with astonishment, and in a tone of pique, asked:

"Do you mean by that, that if once safely seated in your sister's place, you would throw me over? I am not afraid of that, for you are so utterly in my power, that I could crush you and hurl you down with a word. Don't threaten me with that, Hester, for, madly as I love you, I may in my turn be tempted to do what would ruin us both."

She repressed the expression of contemptuous scorn that was raging within her, and with a sudden change of manner, lightly said:

"How literal you are, Julian. Did you think I was in earnest when I spoke as I did just now? I have pledged to you my heart and hand, and yet you express a doubt as to my sincerity. It is not I who threaten, but you. I disdain to retort on you in the same manner; our interests are one, so why should we quarrel?"

Macon regarded her doubtfully, but her eyes met his with perfect frankness, and he hastened to make all the atonement in his power, by pouring forth apologies and assurances of utter devotion to her will. Hester accepted them, and with an air of pretty imperiousness, said:

"There—that will do. I am convinced that you did not mean to wound me, but I beg that you will be more careful in the way you express yourself in future. I am not accustomed to be threatened with consequences by any one, and I will not put up with it even from *you*."

"My dearest girl, I was a wretch, a brute, to speak to you as I did, and I entreat that you will forget it. I shall not soon forgive myself; but when you remember that the dread of losing you prompted my harsh words, you will be able to pardon me for uttering them. I love you to that degree, Hester, that the thought of being cast off by you is more terrible to me than death itself."

She cast down her eyes to conceal from him the baleful glitter that came into them at his last words, and in her softest tones, said:

"I will be true to our compact—*death* alone shall sever us."

Before he could reply, a faint sound from the adjoining room was heard, and with an expression of joyful triumph upon his face, Macon turned and went in to the dying man.

Hester waved her hand menacingly after his retiring form, and fiercely muttered:

"You have chosen your fate, and if I am forced to give myself to you, it shall be yours. *Fool!* to dare to threaten *me!*"

CHAPTER VIII.

HESTER'S DOWRY.

When Macon entered Mr. Landry's room, he found him lying with his eyes still closed; but at the sound of his step upon the bare floor he opened them, and in a voice which was yet clear and full, said:

"I heard some one talking with you, and the voice was not Mrs. Brown's. Has—has *she* come?"

"If you mean the young lady you are so anxious to see, she is in the next room, waiting to be summoned to your presence. As soon as she heard of your condition, she insisted on coming hither to nurse you herself."

"She is very kind," said Landry, with some effort; "but—but I shall not trouble her long. I am quite easy now; all pain has left me, and I know what that portends, Doctor, as well as you can tell me."

"While there is life, there is—" began the doctor, with that stereotyped form of words which seem to spring mechanically to the lips of those who are willing to sacrifice truth to maintain delusive hopes; but Landry almost fiercely interrupted him:

"Don't dare to tell me there is hope, sir, when you know even better than I do, that such a thing is impossible. You have already spoken my doom, and fixed the limit of my earthly life, yet you would, in this supreme hour, make an effort to delude me."

"Pardon me, Mr. Landry, and pray do not excite yourself. We doctors are so much in the habit of encouraging our patients, that I spoke without reflection. Shall I bring Miss Blake in?"

"First tell me if there is any favorable change in my daughter. Will she be able to listen to, and understand a communication I wish to make to her before I go hence?"

Macon shook his head decisively.

"Miss Landry is in no immediate danger, but she will not be in a condition to comprehend anything for many hours to come. She will recover—I assure you of that, so have no fears on her account; but it will be impossible to arouse her from the saving sleep in which she now lies bound. If such an attempt were made, I would not answer for the consequences."

Landry sighed heavily, and faintly said:

"The will of God be done. I am punished for my weak cowardliness in shrinking from telling her something she should have known, that she might do an act of justice if I were suddenly cut off, as I am now. Fate is kinder to me than I deserve, for I have still the power to make known my wishes to one who will claim their fulfillment, and my daughter will carry them into effect; I feel sure of that. Give me something to sustain my strength, Doctor, that I may get through this last duty without fainting."

Macon poured some stimulating drops into a cup, and soothingly said:

"You will bear the excitement better than you think. In spite of all you have suffered, there is great vital power in you yet. It will not suffice to restore, but it will prolong life beyond the limit I at first thought possible."

"I am glad to hear that. Keep life in me as long as possible, that I may have a chance to tell my daughter what must be made known to her, sooner or later."

Macon gravely said:

"I cannot deceive you in this extremity, Mr. Landry. It will not be safe to excite your daughter in any way, and what you have to say must be communicated to Miss Blake. If it is important, as your words lead me to believe, the sooner it is told the better, for your mind may wander toward the last. Pardon me, sir, for speaking so plainly, but in the present state of affairs no other course is left to me."

After a pause of some length, Landry said:

"You are quite right, Doctor, and I thank you for reminding me of what is approaching. My mind is perfectly clear now, and if it is hereafter necessary, you can bear witness to the fact that I am capable of disposing of that portion of my property which I design as a provision for Hester Blake."

"I will cheerfully do that, sir. I am deeply interested in all that concerns Miss Blake, and I would do anything to serve her."

The sick man eagerly regarded him, and slowly asked:

"Do you aspire to be more than a friend to this young girl?"

"I do, sir; and I am happy to say that she is my betrothed wife."

"Then she must have told you—she would not keep back the truth from the man she has promised to marry."

With perfect calmness, Macon said:

"Mrs. Blake has concealed nothing from her daughter, and they have been perfectly candid with me, Mr. Landry. I love this rare and beautiful woman to that degree that I would make her my wife if all the world arose in opposition to my choice."

Landry put forth his uninjured hand, and firmly grasping that of Macon, spoke with much emotion:

"Is it indeed so? Then my poor girl's future is settled, and with you I trust she will lead a safe and happy life. I think it fortunate for her that she has found a good and honorable man who will protect and care for her."

"I esteem it great good fortune to myself that I have won her consent to accept *me*," replied Macon, with perfect sincerity. "A woman so rarely endowed as Hester Blake is not often found, and a valuable gem is not less highly estimated because it may chance to lack a rich setting. I love her with my whole heart, and I am ready to devote my life to her."

"Then you must be worthy of her, and she shall not come to you a penniless bride. Bring her to me now, if you please, and leave me to talk with her alone. Since she already knows in what relation we stand to each other, the task I have before me will not be so difficult as I thought."

Macon raised the head of the speaker, carefully adjusted his pillows, and then went to summon Hester. She had listened to every word that passed between them, and she indignantly felt that Macon was using every means to narrow the net in which she was entangled; but when he came into the room in which she was, he found her bending over the sick girl, and she turned an impassive face to him as she softly asked:

"Is he ready to receive me now?"

"He is quite ready. Come."

With light tread she glided through the door and closed it after her, resolute that Macon should not overhear what passed between herself and the dying man.

As Hester drew near the bed, the eyes of her father were dimmed with tears, and he put out his uninjured arm to embrace her. She wavered a moment, as if uncertain what course to take, but she finally bowed her head upon his breast, and softly murmured:

"My father!—at last I am happy enough to receive the paternal embrace so long denied me. I come to you as your child—to watch over you—to be near you to the last."

Landry murmured something like a prayer as he held her to him, and pressed his lips at intervals upon her brow and hair. He then released her, and faintly said:

"Sit where the light can fall on you, my child. Many years have passed since I last looked on you, and I wish to mark the changes time has made. Do not reproach me that I sent you from me, Hester, for your mother passionately refused to give you up, and I thought that I had no right to separate you from her. In revealing to you the story of that bitter past, she has surely been just enough to me to show you that I did all that was possible for you—that I have not been unmindful of the claims you have upon me."

"She was just to you," said Hester briefly. "If she had prejudiced me against you, I should not be here now."

He sighed heavily, and after a pause, said:

"It is a bitter retrospect, yet I hold myself blameless toward Hagar Blake. I loved another woman when I was made the victim of that base plot. But I cannot speak to *you* of that. The woman who played the chief part in it is your mother, and to you I wish to say nothing of her that can wound you.

"My father sent me away, and took steps to free me, for I was but a boy. As soon as the divorce was granted he insisted that I should marry my betrothed, and I did so."

He paused, overcome with emotion; and after a struggle with himself, went on:

"I brought that other one to my home as my bride. She—she faded from me.—O God! these memories are killing me! I must not recall that fatal time, or I shall not have strength to explain to you why I summoned you hither."

He became so pale, and looked so wild, that Hester feared some such result herself, and she hastened to give him his drops, and softly said:

"I know enough of that unhappy past to be able to exonerate you from too great blame. My mother has told me enough to convince me that your love for her was far less absorbing and devoted than hers for you. Let us not speak of what excites you so painfully."

"No; words cannot change the immutable past," he said, with much effort. "I have suffered bitterly through her means, yet the wrong was to me, not to her. But we will let that pass. I came hither to atone to you for giving you up in your infancy, by providing for you in the future. I had prepared such settlements as would have rendered you independent, but they have been destroyed. Nothing remains for me now but to explain to you what I had intended, and get you to make a statement in writing, which my daughter Estelle will consider a sacred duty to carry into effect. She is the truest and most affectionate of children, and any wish of mine will be carefully attended to by her."

"Explain to me what your wishes are, and I will write them down for my sister's inspection. I have brought paper and a pencil in my pocket, as I thought they would be wanted. They will suffice, I suppose; as any paper drawn up by me in my own favor, would have no legal signification. To Estelle's sense of justice I have to trust in the future, and it matters little how the bequest is written."

There was something so dry and matter of fact in her tone and manner, that her father regarded her in pained surprise. He deprecatingly said:

"It is the best I can do for you now, Hester, and your claims will be as religiously attended to by her to whom I leave you, as if they were secured by every form of law. The tie of blood between you shows itself so plainly that no one may doubt it, and Estelle will not be disposed to do so. Hers is a noble and true nature, and I can trust her to do all that should be done to render you independent."

"Since nothing else is left me, I must trust her too, I suppose. I understood my mother to say that nothing has been secured to her, and *she* should be your first consideration, I think."

Landry impatiently waved the hand he could still use, and with stern bitterness said:

"She long ago forfeited all claim on me. What I have done has been done for *your* sake, not for hers. I will give to you, and you may give to your mother; it will be your duty to share with her, but *I* shall give her nothing. Get your paper ready, and I will dictate what I wish to say to my daughter Estelle. I can leave to her the duty of providing for her sister, but I cannot impose on *her* the task of attending to the wants of the woman who—"

He paused suddenly, and his crushed frame quivered with emotion. He closed his eyes, and became so pale that Hester thought he was about to faint. She bathed his face with cold water, which had been placed on the table near her for that purpose, and after a few moments he spoke again.

"I am talking too much, and exhausting myself. Let us dispatch the business we have in hand, or I may find myself too weak to attend to it."

Hester found a vacant place on the table, and after smoothing out the paper she had folded and placed in her pocket when she was preparing to come to him, she coldly said:

"I am quite ready now, sir. I will write down whatever you wish to say."

With most painful effort, and many pauses, Landry dictated to her the following letter:

"My Beloved Estelle: Lying in extremity, with no hope of living to see the light of another day, I address you these last lines through the hand of a sister, of whose existence you have never known, conjuring you, by all your love and reverence for me, to carry into effect my wishes with regard to her.

"Hester Blake is my daughter. Who her mother was, others will tell you after I am gone. It will suffice to you that this young girl has on you the claim of blood; that I command you, in my dying hours, to make for her the provision I have long designed for her. The unfortunate accident through which I shall lose my life will prevent me from carrying out my intentions myself; but to your filial piety they can be intrusted, and I know that you will fulfill them to the letter.

"From the property belonging to me, independent of that owned by yourself and Clarice, I have set aside the sum of fifteen thousand dollars as a provision for Hester, and it has been placed in the hands of Messrs. Grigg & Hendron, bankers in New Orleans. You are eighteen years old, and by the laws of Louisiana you are of an age to act for yourself in business matters. Withdraw this money from Grigg & Hendron, and have it settled on your half-sister as a gift from yourself. It is the half of all I possess in the world, and it is all that I can give for this purpose.

"And now, my daughter—child of my love and pride—I bid you my last solemn farewell, leaving in your hands a sacred trust, to be performed to the living and the dead.

"Your loving father, Armand Landry."

Hester wrote on with a steady hand, though her heart swelled with rage and disappointment at the insignificance of the bequest made to her. The income from such a sum would barely suffice to support two persons with the strictest economy, and her mother was to be dependent on herself. She thought of the wealth that would fall to her younger sisters, and her heart hardened to that pallid sufferer who thought her sufficiently provided for by such a pittance as this. If *this* was the atonement he had spoken of, it was a very mean and insufficient one, and the daughter he evidently adores should be made to pay the penalty of her father's want of liberality. She would no longer refuse to act with her mother, and seize the fortune which she could so easily make her own.

Hester sat silent so long that Landry scrutinized her face, and read something of the disappointment she felt. He said:

"You think that I have not given you enough, Hester—that I should have been more liberal in providing for a child of my own, so unfortunately situated as you are. Such was my wish and intention, if longer life had been granted me. I meant this as a certainty for the present, and from year to year I would have added a few thousands to your fortune, till you were in possession of twice the sum I have named in that paper. I have no longer the power to do that. Your mother had no fortune, and under the laws of Louisiana you will be entitled to claim less than I have given you. My children's estate is a large one, but I have comparatively little. They derive their wealth from their mothers, and I have only been their manager. The speculations undertaken by me for your benefit have been unfortunate. If they had yielded what I hoped, I could have made you rich; but I lost nearly all that was embarked in them, and it is out of my power to do more for you than give you what will raise you above dependence on others."

In a constrained voice Hester replied:

"I should be grateful perhaps for even that much, but I will not deny that I hoped for more. The interest on fifteen thousand dollars will barely enable myself and my mother to live, and I have a taste for luxury, an ambition to make a figure in the world, which I have been led to believe you would afford me the means to gratify. The thought of vegetating in a small village, as we have hitherto done, is odious to me; and if you could and would have lifted me above it, I should have regarded your memory with affectionate gratitude."

"You surely will do that under any circumstances, Hester, for I have done all for you that lay in my power. I have given you education, independence, and a position in life which, if comparatively humble, is better than that to which your mother's antecedents entitle you. I do not mean to be unkind, my dear, but I am compelled to refer to these things in my own defence. You do not look as if your life has been a discontented or unhappy one, and to me you owe all that you have enjoyed. The prospect of a home of your own is before you, and this young doctor who claims to be engaged to you seems to be an intelligent and capable man, who will know how to use to good advantage the money you will have. He tells me that you have promised to marry him, and of course you must believe him to be worthy of the affection you doubtless feel for him, since you have consented to become his wife."

A hot flush surged over the listener's face, and then she grew pale as death. Her teeth were firmly set for a few moments, and she struggled for self-command to enable her to repress the torrent of bitter words that arose to her lips. She finally said, in an unnaturally low and sweet voice:

"I appreciate Dr. Macon's attachment to me at its just value, and I shall know how to repay him for it. It is true that I am betrothed to him; he loves me to that degree that he is willing to overlook the fact that my mother was a repudiated wife. But he knows now that I am a Landry—that you have the control of vast wealth—and he will naturally expect me to be endowed with such a fortune as a daughter of your family should be entitled to. As to myself, the only atonement you can make to me for sending me so far from you, is to give me all that you can claim as your own."

The voice changed its tone as she uttered the last words; it became hard and bitter, and her father regarded her with a mingled expression of doubt and pain. He said:

"I regret to see that, young as you are, you care more for money than you should. I have explained to you how I am situated, and I assure you that I have done all that is possible for you. Dr. Macon wooed you without expecting wealth with your hand, and I think he will care little for it in comparison with yourself. He loves you disinterestedly, as far as I can judge. I possessed nothing when your mother became my wife. She had no fortune. Consequently you are legally entitled to far less than I have requested my daughter Estelle to settle on you. You must be satisfied with that, for it is all I can give you."

Landry again grew faint, and Hester busied herself in restoring him, though she now felt comparatively little solicitude as to his condition. She had ascertained the limit of his liberality to herself, and it had fallen so far short of her expectations that she only felt a sort of contemptuous pity for the man who could not lift her above the necessity of marrying such a man as Dr. Macon. She indignantly thought that this obscure lover would not for a moment have been tolerated as an aspirant for the hand of her more fortunate sister; yet her father congratulated her on having won his affections, and evidently thought the man quite good enough for her mother's daughter.

Her heart grew bitter and hard toward him as these thoughts passed through her mind, and she reflected with some satisfaction on the power that lay in her own hands to secure for herself the brilliant future which of right belonged to her sister. Such scruples as she had hitherto felt were fading away before the conviction that with what her father proposed to give her, a residence in Europe with any of the advantages she was ambitious of obtaining would be impossible. She must accept Dr. Macon, and endure the humdrum life he could secure for her, or seize the golden bait held out to her, and trust to future chances to rid herself of him altogether. She hated him, yet he seemed to be her fate; but she vindictively thought that she would triumph over him yet, at any cost to him, adoringly as he loved her.

When her father again recovered sufficiently to renew the conversation, he earnestly said:

"I trust in God that you have not inherited your mental qualities from your mother, Hester, for that would be a fatal dower for you. *Noblesse oblige* has been the motto of the Landrys, as it was of the old French house from which we are collaterally descended, and I trust that you are as worthy to inscribe it upon your heart and life as either of my younger children. Estelle is all that I can wish her to be; and Clarice, my youngest darling, promises as fairly in the full development of womanhood. You are fair in outward seeming as they, and I trust that the training of your mother has not marred the noble nature that should be yours. I gave you up to her who had the undoubted right to claim you; but I did it with many misgivings, fearing that she would use the power intrusted to her to implant seeds of bitterness in a soil that I feel sure was adapted to a better growth. Assure me that she has not attempted this, Hester, and I shall die better contented. I have a tender concern for your future, and through goodness alone is happiness to be attained."

A disdainful smile curved the girl's lip, and she coldly said:

"It is a pity that you did not always act up to that conviction. Had you done so, my mother would not have been deserted for a rival, nor I thrown out into the world a waif, without name or fortune. I am your eldest child, and I have as strong a claim on you as either of my sisters. My mother has cherished me; she has devoted her life to me since the hour of my birth, and I aspire to nothing higher or truer than she has taught me. Mentally I am her child, though I can see that from you I inherit the dark beauty of my face and the symmetry of my person. Such as I am she has made me, and I wish to hear nothing derogatory to her from your lips."

An expression of deep pain crossed the pale face lying back upon the pillows, and the eyes that dwelt upon the speaker were full of pity. In a broken voice, he said:

"God help you, poor child! for He alone can do it. Hagar Blake has done her work, and she will have her reward. I cannot see what the future is to bring forth for you; but guided by her, it can be fruitful of nothing that is good or noble. I did Hagar Blake no wrong, though she sinned deeply, deeply against me. God will judge between us, and I leave it to Him. I made all the reparation she had the right to ask, and she should have accepted it in the spirit in which it was offered. Hester, my dying injunction to you is, to be kind to your mother, but not to be guided by her counsels. Something tells me, in this supreme hour, that they will be fatal to you; there is a thrilling sense of horror in my blood when I think of that woman, and what she may instigate you to do. Remember in time how powerless you are, and be tempted to nothing which may bring down ruin on your own head."

Hester arose from her seat, and with defiant pride replied:

"I am not likely to jeopardize my own interests even at the instigation of my mother. I asked you not to speak evil of her in my presence, yet you will not forbear. I think that this interview had better come to an end, for you are becoming too much excited, and I am losing the self-command necessary to be maintained in the presence of one who is suffering as you are. I will send Dr. Macon in to you, while I remain with my sister."

"Go, if you desire it," he faintly said. "You have learned what you wished to know, and now there is nothing to detain you near me. I am quite aware that I have no claim on your affections."

In spite of the resentful feelings aroused by what she considered the insufficiency of the provision designed for her, Hester was touched by his last words. She stooped forward, kissed his brow, and more gently said:

"You have a claim on them, but not so strong a one as belongs of right to my mother. I cannot remain near you if you persist in speaking unkindly of her. She has been just to you, as I before told you, and bitter as you may be against her, you should spare her, at least in my presence."

He sighed heavily, and after a pause, said:

"I believe you are right, Hester. I will say no more of Hagar, though it will be well for you to remember the words I have spoken. I hope that she will make no effort to force herself into my presence, in my helpless and shattered condition. I have already signified my wishes to Dr. Macon with regard to that, and I trust she will respect them."

"I think you need have no fear on that score. I came hither with Dr. Macon, and my mother is not in the house. It could afford her no satisfaction to see you in your present condition."

"I am not so sure of that. She must not come hither at all. I think the suspicion that she was near enough to breathe the same atmosphere with me would extinguish the faint flame of life that lingers in my frame."

Although Hester knew that it was her mother's purpose to take up her abode at the farm-house till all was over, she composedly replied:

"I left my mother at home, with the understanding that I am to remain with you as long as my presence may be necessary. She will hardly make an attempt to intrude on one to whom her presence would be so unwelcome. You loved her once—or at least she thought so; and it seems hard that you should shrink from her now with such bitter loathing."

"You are right in saying she *thought* I loved her; that is her only excuse for the course she took to secure the position of my wife. It seems hard to you that I feel thus toward your mother, but *she* knows that if I had sinned against her, she more than repaid me. But we are not to talk of her. She cannot be discussed between us with any friendly spirit, so we will let the past alone. Sit beside me, Hester, and take my hand in your own for a little while. Drowsiness is creeping over me again, and with the clasp of your hand on mine, I shall feel less as if I am slipping into the land of shadows, when consciousness is leaving me. I do not fear to die, but I shrink from the thought of going just yet, when there is a chance that my darling Estelle may revive sufficiently to be brought to my bedside, to speak with me before I go."

Hester knew how fallacious was this hope, but she quietly said, as she sat down and drew his cold hand in the warm clasp of her own:

"When my sister awakes from the deep sleep into which she has fallen, she will probably be able to come to you. In the mean time, if my presence is a comfort to you, I will remain beside you."

"It *is* a comfort, Hester. Do you know that you and your sister were both named for my mother? It is the same name, though Eleanor liked the French form best. Oh, Nelly, my darling!—my darling, I am coming to you, after all these weary years of separation."

What he had intended to say further to her seemed to have passed out of his mind, as the image of his lost love arose before his mental vision; his lips trembled, and tears forced themselves from his closed eyelids, but weakness and the narcotics he had taken overcame him, and he soon slept, while Hester sat motionless, holding his hand.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A CRUSHING SARCASM.

Chief-Justice Spofford, during the latter part of his official career, was about as brusque and biting as man could be, and in his bitter moods he was apt to be as ungenerous as he was sarcastic. When left to his own meditations, with nothing to ruffle his temper, his decisions were clear and compact, and his legal papers patterns of ornate erudition; and, moreover, his decisions were held as good and sufficient law of precedent.

Once upon a time Spofford was at the head of the Bench holding a Court of Equity, and in the case under trial it became necessary for an attorney to prove the death of a certain man. This attorney was by name Wallingten—a thin-visaged, nervous, buzzing fellow, who had the reputation of never letting go his hold upon a case until he had wrung the last possible dollar from it.

Wallington produced what he considered a sufficient proof of the death of the man in question; but the Judge would not accept it.

"That is no proof at all," was Spofford's emphatic remark.

The attorney brought forward other evidence. And still old Spofford shook his head.

"It will not do, sir. We cannot accept that as proof."

"Your Honor," cried Wallington, with much show of vexation, "pardon me if I deem your decision extremely hard. Why will you not believe me? I knew the man well to the day of his death; I saw him dead with my own eyes; and I attended his funeral. He was my client, your Honor."

"*Your client?*" exclaimed Spofford. "Why in the name of sense and reason didn't you state that fact in the first place? *No wonder he died! We admit the proof.*—Go on, sir."

The Judge probably thought but lightly of the sarcasm at the time, but it proved a crusher for poor Wallington—so much so that he was forced to seek another field for the exercise of his profession. S. C., JR.

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—A nation's character is the sum of its splendid deeds; they constitute one common patrimony, the nation's inheritance. They awe foreign powers, they arouse and animate our own people.

WIT AND HUMOR.

"If I were in California," said a young fop, in company, the other evening, "instead of working in the mines, I would waylay some miner with a bag of gold, knock out his brains, gather up the gold, and run." "I think you would do better to gather up the brains," quietly responded a young lady; "a man should always first secure what he is most deficient in."

The Louisville *Ledger* tells about a dog a few miles from Paducah, which was brought up away from all his kindred, and having never heard a bark, took to crowing, the song of chanticleer being familiar to his ear. His existence is probably useless, for if Paducah is like other communities, it has crow-curs enough without the dog.

The Troy *Times* tells about a French physician who bleaches noses of Bacchanalian hue by means of electricity. This is the homeopathic treatment, founded on the theory that like cures like; for when noses have been reddened by Jersey lightning, it ought to be easy to bleach them by electricity.

The telegraph says the lake fishermen are to meet in Detroit in March to consider means to secure their right to fish on British soil. It strikes us that British soil would be a queer place to fish in, did we not remember that there has been a long controversy over the fishing grounds of Newfoundland.

A Pennsylvania husband informed "a Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of Women" that he didn't care to have anything to do with the new "women's clubs." "The fact is," said he, "that my old woman's club is enough for me, and sometimes it's a leetle too much!"

John Ingle lives at Ingle's Station, near Evansville, Ind. His son John has a son named John whose son is named John, the second one named being President of the Evansville and Crawfordsville railroad. It will be noted that this is an Ingleish family of Johns sons.

A stingy millionaire having died, his family wanted to have his body petrified, so it would keep for all time, whereupon one of his nephews remarked, "You'll only have to complete what nature has begun. His heart was petrified long ago."

Gen. E. M. Lee is lecturing in Massachusetts on the subject of "Four years in the saddle with Sheridan and Kilpatrick." It looks as if this was packing them in rather closely, but as they stood it four years, it may not have been uncomfortable, after all.

The Pittsburgh *Commercial* says the poet Stedman discovered Pan in Wall street. The popular notion is that the denizens of that street deal wholly in tin, so it is fair to infer that only a tin Pan has rewarded the poet's explorations.

German expressman to mistress of the house: "I have got der shmall pox vot vas shent for you." Mistress of the house hastily shuts and bolts the door, and sends the servant out the back way for a disinfectant.

"You are writing my complaint on very rough paper, sir," said a client to his lawyer. "Yes," responded the lawyer, "because, you see, the Court always requires these things to be filed."

Charles Kingsley, canon, comes to write for a Colorado paper because a son and daughter of his live at Colorado Springs. But how are the *other* Colorado canons to be accounted for?

San Francisco boasts of a woman who has taken to omnibus driving there. In Eastern cities it is not uncommon to find women who have taken to the stage for a livelihood.

A young lady who was recently out riding became alarmed when the horse began to kick, and naively requested her beau to get out and hold the animal's leg.

"Ah, parson, if I could only take my gold with me!" sighed a dying deacon to his pastor. "If you could, it might melt!" was the consoling reply.

Recollect that there are always two sides to a story. Especially in politics, stories are liable to be party-colored.

Can it be justly said that a man who marries an heiress is a lover of music because he marries for-tune?

The Buckeye State is called Ohio because it is a state of great sighs.

A wedding trip—A breach of promise.

The shades of night—ghosts.

CURRENT ITEMS.

A rogue in London has been deceiving the doctors and living luxuriously by feigning paralysis, becoming an inmate of the different hospitals, and securing the best attention by pretending to make his will, leaving a legacy of £1,000 to each institution. He has been made the subject of clinical lectures, and in several cases enthusiastic students sat up all night with him to watch and record the minutest symptoms of his case, when, in fact, there was nothing at all the matter with him.

An Indianapolis man imperilled his life, cut his hands, and bruised himself generally, a few days ago, in stopping a runaway horse which a lady had left untied, and who, when she came up, began to scold about the dirty buggy and muddy reins, and wound up by telling the man to get some paper and wipe off the mud. This was a heavy blow on his gallantry, and sent it below par, where he is afraid it will remain for some time.

Some timorous persons have become alarmed by the declarations of scientific men that "there are an infinitude of comets floating around loose in the sky." There is evidently no cause for alarm, however, inasmuch as there have always been as many comets tearing around as there are now. Kepler long ago said that comets were as plentiful in the sky as fish in the sea; and yet no harm to the earth has ever come from them.

A few weeks since, during an unexpected snow squall, a flock of about thirty wild geese flew into the yard of a farmer living near Lowell, Mass., and mingled with the tame ones. The farmer's wife and child, seeing them, went out, and opening the barn door, drove the tame geese in, and the others followed. The door was then closed on them. The next day thirty good geese were offered for sale in the market.

Opium eating has become so prevalent in Kentucky, and is occasioning such terrible results, that the Legislature of that State has passed a bill that, on suitable affidavit, any person who, through excessive use of opium, arsenic, hasheesh, or any drug, has become incompetent to manage himself or his estate, may be confined in an asylum and placed under guardianship, as in the case of drunkards or lunatics.

Fire Marshal Williams of Chicago, in his annual report, says the way the great fire in October spread itself about was "to his surprise." He limits the duration of the fire to twenty-eight hours, and places the number of buildings destroyed at twenty-five thousand, covering an area of two thousand acres. The total loss he places at $190,526,500, and the insurance at $90,000,000.

A company of juveniles in Toronto have carried on a profitable business for some time by capturing dogs in the streets and restoring them to their owners, when liberal rewards could be obtained for so doing. They kept a yard in which they frequently had as many as twenty canine prisoners at a time.

Dr. William Hewer, an English miser, aged eighty-four years, long a noted character in San Francisco, was recently found dead on a pile of rags in his room in Dupont street. Twelve thousand pounds, English money, was found in his room, which had not been swept in fourteen years.

A man in Philadelphia was recently before the court charged with disciplining his wife by putting her occasionally into a "sweat box," constructed for that purpose in the cellar, about two and a half feet square, and open at the top. He did it to cure her of intemperance.

There are three States in the Union in which colored voters outnumber the white ones: namely, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina. In Louisiana the colored population exceeds the white by 2,145; in Mississippi by 61,305; and in South Carolina by 126,147.

A little boy of Newark, N. J., a few days ago, who did not want to go to school, deliberately laid his arm on the car track and held it there until a passing train severed it just below the elbow. It is needless to say that he will have a long and painful vacation.

The *Albany Knickerbocker* says a blind woman in Sioux city, Iowa, puts a needle and thread between her teeth, and with a dexterous movement of the tongue, passes the thread through the eye of the needle.

An old man was recently knocked on the head by his son and killed near Elizabethtown, Ind. The son had just served out a term in the penitentiary, *and was let out twenty years too soon.*

A man was picked up near Muscatine, Iowa, one day last week, floating down the Mississippi on a trunk. His skiff had sunk, but his trunk saved him.

DON'T PROMISE TOO MUCH.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

It is always your duty, you know,
  To do just the best that you can;
Though your station be ever so low,
  You can rise to the height of a man.
Be manly in morals and speech,
  Give tone to whatever you touch;
And learn just how far you can reach,
  For fear you may promise too much.

Don't promise, though often you feel
  Your heart is with sympathy warm;
Your purpose you'd better conceal
  Till sure that you've strength to perform.
Perchance some poor friend, whose weak arm
  Has leaned on this treacherous crutch,
Has come to some desperate harm,
  Because you have promised too much.

'Tis kindness that prompts you to say
  The words that are sweet to the ear,
But cruel it is to delay
  The help that you promised was near.
The deeds that are trifles to you,
  By some are not reckoned as such;
So do what you've promised to do,
  And be sure you don't promise too much.

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BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

By MRS. SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE HIDDEN HAND," "SELF-MADE," "THE BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER CXVI.

WEDDINGS AND WEDDING RECEPTIONS.

> What do you think of marriage?
> I take it as those who deny purgatory.
> It locally contains or Heaven or Hell:
> There is no third place in it. WEBSTER.

It was a beautiful day, near the last of May. And the scenery all around Blue Cliff Hall was glorious with sunshine, bloom and verdure.

A happy party of friends was assembled at the Hall that day for a double purpose—to meet the returning bridegroom and bride, who were expected to arrive that evening, and to assist at their wedding reception, which was to be further graced by two new bridals the next morning; for it had been arranged by correspondence that Stephen Lyle and Laura Lytton and Joseph Brent and Electra Coroni should be married on that occasion.

All was ready; the house newly restored, decorated and furnished, the rooms aired and adorned with flowers, and the wedding breakfast laid out in the long dining-room.

The supper table for the returning travellers was set in the small dining-room, opening upon the garden of roses.

Carriages had been sent from the Hall early that morning to meet the travellers, who were expected to reach Wendover by the noon train from Richmond, and to come direct to the Hall, so as to arrive in time for an early tea.

On the delightful porch in front of the house, that commanded a view of the carriage drive and the forest road beyond, sat a pleasant group, enjoying the magnificent sunset of that mountain region, and watching the road for the first appearance of the carriages that were to bring home their beloved young friends.

This happy group was composed of Mrs. Fanning, Laura Lytton, Electra Coroni, Stephen Lyle and Joseph Brent.

"I hope they will arrive before the sun goes quite down. I should like them to come home in the sunshine," said Laura Lytton, looking anxiously at the glorious orb just then touching the horizon.

No one answered. All were watching the setting sun, and listening for the sound of the carriage wheels until a few moments had passed, and then Electra said, with a sigh:

"You will not get your wish then, for the sun is gone, and they are not come."

"They are coming now, however. I hear the sound of their carriage wheels," said Joseph Brent.

"Yes, indeed, for I see the carriage now," added Mr. Lyle, as the travelling coach rolled rapidly in sight of the whole party, and turned into the home drive.

A few moments more, and the carriage drew up before the house, and Alden Lytton alighted and handed out his wife.

Another moment, and Alden was in the arms of his sister, and Emma on the bosom of Mrs. Fanning.

Hearty greetings, warm embraces ensued, and then they held off to look at each other.

Emma was more beautiful and Alden handsomer than ever.

"What a happy coming home!" said Emma gratefully. "And you are all so well! And you are all here, except those who are in Heaven. Stay!—I think *they* also are here to meet us, though we do not see them! Come, let us enter the house."

"Let me show you to your rooms. No one shall be your 'groom of the chambers,' Mr. and Mrs. Alden Lytton, but myself," said Laura playfully, as she led the way up stairs to the elegant apartments that had been prepared for the young master and mistress of the house.

"Come too, Electra. I do not wish to lose sight of you so soon, my child," said Emma kindly, as they went along. "Is everything arranged satisfactorily to yourselves, my dears, and are you both ready to be married at the same time to-morrow?" she inquired, addressing her two companions.

"Why, of course," smiled Laura.

Very early the next morning the whole household was happily astir.

The youthful family met at an early breakfast in the little dining-room, and then separated, and went to their chambers to adorn themselves for the bridals.

A little later in the morning, carriages containing guests bidden to the wedding began to arrive. The guests were received first by accomplished ushers, who took them to handsome and convenient dressing-rooms, in which they could put the last perfecting touches on their toilets, after which they were ushered into the long drawing-room, where they were received by Mr. and Mrs. Alden Lytton.

Emma was beautifully dressed for this occasion. She wore a rich white satin, with a point lace overskirt, looped up with white roses sprinkled with small diamonds like dew. A wreath of the same flowers, bedewed in the same way, rested on her rich golden hair. A diamond necklace and bracelets adorned her bosom and arms. A delicate bouquet of white roses was held in her hand. Dainty gloves, and so forth, of course completed her toilet.

The two brides were dressed exactly alike, in long trained, rich white silk dresses, with illusion overdresses and illusion vails, white orange-blossom wreaths, pearl necklaces and bracelets, and dainty white kid gloves, and carried delicate white lace handkerchiefs and white bouquets.

The bride's-maids were all dressed in a uniform of white tarletan, trained, with overdresses of the same, rose-colored sashes and bows, and rose wreaths on their heads.

The bridegrooms wore the regulation "invisible blue" swallow-tailed coats and pantaloons, white satin vests, patent leather boots and kids. The groom's-men were got up in precisely the same ridiculous—I mean, fashionable—style.

Now, reader, did you ever see a double marriage ceremony performed?

If not, I will tell you how this was done.

The first bride and groom were Mr. Lyle and Miss Lytton. They stood in the middle of the semicircle, immediately facing the Bishop. The second bride and groom, Mr. Brent and Miss Coroni, stood on each side of them, Mr. Brent standing next to Mr. Lyle, and Miss Coroni standing next to Miss Lytton. The six bride's-maids of course completed the semicircle on the ladies' side, and the six groom's-men on the gentlemen's.

The opening exhortation was made and the opening prayers were offered for both pairs together.

Then the momentous questions were put and answered, and the marriage vows were made, by each pair separately.

Each bride was given away in turn by Alden Lytton. Finally the concluding prayer was offered, and the benediction pronounced upon both.

It was over.

Congratulations, tears, smiles and kisses followed. A half an hour in pleasant chatter, in which every one talked and no one listened, followed, and then the doors of the dining-room were thrown open and the company was invited in to the breakfast.

Three long tables stood parallel to each other, the whole length of the room, leaving only space to pass around them.

Each table was decorated with the most fragrant and beautiful flowers, adorned with the most elegant plate, china and glass, and loaded with every delicacy appropriate to the occasion.

But the middle table was distinguished by *the* "wedding-cake" *par excellence*—an elegant and beautiful piece of art, formed like a Grecian temple of Hymen, erected upon a rock, adorned with beautiful forms, birds, butterflies, flowers, and so forth.

This middle table was also honored with the presence of the brides and bridegrooms, with their attendants and immediate friends, and with that of the officiating Bishop.

After the first course, Mr. Lytton, who occupied a seat at the foot of this table, arose in his place and made the usual little speech, and proposed the health of both "happy pairs."

This was drank with enthusiasm.

Then the health of the bride's-maids was proposed, and honored.

Mr. Brent proposed their accomplished host and hostess. And this toast was honored with an enthusiasm equal to that which had attended that of the brides and bridegrooms.

An hour, every moment of which was filled up with enjoyment, was spent at the table, and then the beautiful hostess, Mrs. Alden Lytton, gave the signal, and the ladies all arose and withdrew.

The two brides, accompanied by Emma, went up stairs to their rooms to change their bridal dresses for travelling suits, for the two carriages were already waiting at the gates to convey them to Wendover, whence they were to take the train for Richmond *en route* for the North.

They were soon dressed in their pretty suits of soft dove-colored silk, with hats and gloves of the same shade.

They went down to the drawing-room, still accompanied by Emma.

The gentlemen had just come in from the breakfast table, and all the guests were assembled there to see the happy pairs off on their bridal tours.

Emma had left the room for a few minutes, to give some orders.

Alden Lytton had just embraced his sister, and was holding the hand of his brother-in-law, wishing him all manner of happiness and prosperity, when the door opened, and Jerome entered, saying:

"There's a gemman out here wants to see Mr. Lytton most particular."

"Show him in," said Alden Lytton, smiling, and expecting to see some guest who had come too late for the wedding.

CHAPTER CXVII.

A TERRIBLE SUMMONS.

> "You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting
> With most admired disorder." SHAKESPEARE.

The servant left the room, and presently returned and ushered in a tall, stout, grey-haired man, whom all present recognized as Mr. John Bowlen, the deputy sheriff of the county.

The new-comer bowed to the assembled company, and walked straight up to Alden Lytton, who advanced to meet him.

"You are Mr. Alden Lytton, I presume," said the Deputy Sheriff.

"Why, of course I am, Mr. Bowlin. You know that quite well, don't you?" smiled Alden.

"I thought I did; but I wished to be quite sure, in a case like this. You are my prisoner, Mr. Alden Lytton," said the Deputy Sheriff, so calmly and distinctly that every one in the room both heard and understood the strange words.

Yet no one uttered any exclamation of surprise. I think they were all too much stunned for that.

Alden Lytton simply stared in silent amazement at the officer, while others, including the two bridegrooms, gathered around him.

"What did you say just now? Perhaps I did not hear you aright," inquired Alden, elevating his eyebrows, for there was something that struck him as unreal, ludicrous and bordering upon the burlesque, in the whole situation.

"I said that you were my prisoner, Mr. Alden Lytton," answered the Deputy Sheriff gravely. "I repeat that you are my prisoner."

"PRISONER!" echoed a score of voices, giving expression at length to their amazement.

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen, he is my prisoner. I think I spoke plainly enough; and I hope I shall have no trouble in making the arrest," answered the Deputy Sheriff, who, if he were not behaving very rudely, was certainly not doing his duty very courteously.

"Upon what charge, I pray you, am I to be arrested?" inquired Mr. Lytton sarcastically, still inclined to treat the whole matter as a very bad practical joke.

"You may read the warrant, sir," answered the officer, unfolding a document and placing it in the hands of Alden Lytton, who, with some anger and curiosity, but no anxiety, began to read it.

"What is the matter? What does this person want here?" inquired Emma, in surprise, as she entered the room, came up to the group and saw the intruder.

"He has some business with me, my love," answered her husband, controlling himself with a great effort, as he read the shameful charges embodied in the warrant commanding his arrest. Then still speaking with forced calmness, he said to the Deputy Sheriff:

"I will go with you first into the library, Mr. Bowlen, where we can talk over this matter with my friends."

And turning to the two bridegrooms, he inquired:

"Can you give me a few minutes with this officer in the library?"

"Certainly," answered Mr. Lyle and Mr. Brent, in one voice.

"Ladies, you will excuse us for a few minutes?" inquired Mr. Lytton, smiling around upon the group.

"Certainly," answered two or three ladies, speaking for the whole party.

"Follow me, if you please, gentlemen," said Alden Lytton, as he led the way to the library.

There the four men—Mr. Lytton, Mr. Lyle, Mr. Brent, and the Sheriff—stood around a small table, all with anxious, and some with questioning looks.

"Read that, and tell me what you think of it," said Mr. Lytton, placing the warrant for his arrest in the hands of Mr. Lyle.

"Think of it! I think it at once the falsest, basest, and most absurd charge that ever was made against an honorable man!" exclaimed Mr. Lyle, in righteous indignation, as he threw the document on the table.

"It is all a diabolical conspiracy!" added Joseph Brent, who had read the warrant over the shoulder of his friend.

"It cannot stand investigation for one moment," said Stephen Lyle.

"And the wretches who got this up should be severely punished!" exclaimed Joseph Brent.

"Most severely!" added Stephen Lyle.

"But what show of foundation could they have had for such a charge? The warrant accuses you of having 'feloniously intermarried with one Emma Angela Cavendish in and during the lifetime of your lawful wife Mary Lytton, now living in this State!' Now who the very mischief is this Mary who claims to be Lytton? Oh, Alden, my son, what *have* you been up to?" inquired Joseph Brent, half in mockery and half in real anxiety.

"Whatever else I may have been 'up to,' I certainly never have been 'up to' marrying two wives at one time," answered Alden, in the same spirit of half banter, half protest.

"But who *is* this Mary, self-styled Lytton?"

"I know no more than the dead."

"But are you sure you never had a slight flirtation with, or a platonic affinity for, a Mary or anybody else?"

"Never! Nor do I even know a single 'Mary' in this world except—"

"Oh, yes; except whom—except whom?"

"Mrs. Mary Grey," answered Alden gravely, and with a certain new disturbance in his manner that had not been there before.

Mr. Lyle brought his hand down upon the table with an emphatic thump.

"That is the woman!" he said, with an air of entire conviction. "But surely you never fell under her baleful spell?"

"Ah! who that ever knew her has not fallen under that baleful spell? But for the last two years I have been entirely disillusioned," answered Alden.

"Come, gentlemen, I am sorry to hurry you, but really," said Sheriff Bowlen, taking out his watch, "it is now two o'clock, and we must get on to Wendover."

"Very well," answered Alden Lytton coldly. Then turning to Mr. Brent and Mr. Lyle, he said:

"And you, my friends, must be getting on too, or you will lose your train. And then what will become of your bridal trips?"

"I do not care what may become of *my* bridal trip; I mean to see you safe through this abominable conspiracy, for a conspiracy it certainly is, whoever may be the conspirators," said Joseph Brent emphatically.

"Pooh, pooh! some very shallow piece of malice, or some very poor practical joke upon me or the magistrate. The wonder is, however, that any magistrate could be found to issue such a warrant as this," said Alden Lytton, making light of a matter which he thought the slightest investigation must soon set right.

In the mean time Joseph Brent and Stephen Lyle spoke apart for a few minutes, and then came to Alden Lytton, and said:

"Look here. We are going with you to the magistrate's office. We are determined to see this matter through. It may be a trifle, or it may not."

"And how about the two pretty girls who are waiting, with their hats on, to be taken on their wedding tours?"

"They can wait. A few hours, which must decide this, can make but little difference to them. Your lovely lady will give them house room to-day," said Mr. Lyle.

As Alden Lytton was about to reply, urging his friends not to delay their journey on his account, he caught sight of Emma standing in the hall, just outside the library door.

Her face was pale with anguish, and her hands were clasped tightly together, as she said:

"Alden! Alden! Oh, Alden! come to me for one moment!"

"Let me go and speak to my wife. I will not run away," said Mr. Lytton sarcastically to the deputy, who was close upon his heels.

And he went up to Emma, and said cheerfully:

"Do not be alarmed, love; there is nothing to fear."

"Oh, Alden, dearest! *what is it?* They are talking about a warrant and an arrest in there. It is not true. Oh, it cannot be true!" said the young wife, a little incoherently.

"There is some mistake, my love, which would be simply ludicrous, if it were not so annoying. I must go to Wendover and set it all right," replied Mr. Lytton cheerfully.

"Are you *certain* it is nothing more than a mistake?" she earnestly inquired.

"Nothing more than a mistake, or a jest, dear love. But I must go to Wendover to set it right."

"But what sort of a mistake is it? What is it all about?"

"I will explain it all when I come back, my wife. I do not quite comprehend it yet."

"How soon will you be back?"

"As soon as ever this matter shall be explained. In time for tea, if possible. Mr. Lyle and Mr. Brent are going with me. You will take care of the girls during the few hours' delay in their journey. There, love—return to your guests and let me go. This officer is growing impatient."

While Alden Lytton was trying to soothe the anxiety of his wife, Mr. Brent and Mr. Lyle had crossed to the drawing-room to explain to their brides that an unexpected event had occurred which would delay their journey for a few hours, during which they would remain as the guests of Mrs. Alden Lytton.

And before the young ladies could make a comment, the Deputy Sheriff, with Alden Lytton in custody, passed out.

Then Stephen Lyle and Joseph Brent hurried out and entered the same carriage occupied by Alden Lytton and the Sheriff.

During the drive to Wendover, the three gentleman tried to learn from the Sheriff more particulars concerning the charges made against Mr. Alden Lytton.

But the Sheriff knew little or nothing concerning those charges beyond what was embodied in the warrant that authorized the arrest.

CHAPTER CXVIII.

THE INVESTIGATION.

> One is my true and honorable wife,
> As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
> That visit my sad heart. SHAKESPEARE.

In due time they reached the village, and were driven at once to the office of the magistrate, Squire Estep of Spring Hill Manor.

No rumor of the arrest had got abroad, and no crowd was collected about the office doors.

The Sheriff alighted first, and was followed out by the accused and his two friends.

They entered the office, where just then no one was present, except the magistrate, one clerk and two constables.

The three gentlemen bowed as they entered, and the venerable magistrate arose and acknowledged their presence by a nod and sat down again.

The Sheriff laid the warrant on the table before the magistrate, and pointing to Mr. Alden Lytton, said:

"That is the prisoner, your Worship."

One of the constables placed chairs, and the gentlemen seated themselves and waited.

"White," said Mr. Estep, addressing one of the constables, "go to the 'Reindeer,' and serve this upon the gentleman to whom it is directed, and whom you will find there."

The constable took the slip of paper from the speaker's hands, bowed and went out.

And the three gentlemen waited with what patience they might command, while the magistrate drummed upon the table with his fingers.

Presently the constable returned, ushering in two persons, in one of whom Alden Lytton recognized his great rival at the bar, Philip Desmond. The other, an elderly gentleman in a clergyman's dress, was a total stranger to him.

Both these gentlemen bowed to the magistrate and to the accused and his friends, and one of them—the clerical stranger—came up to Alden, and to his great amazement, said:

"I am very sorry, Mr. Lytton, in meeting you a second time, to see you here in this position; sorrier still that I am here to bear testimony against you."

While he was saying this, the magistrate, who was engaged in searching among some documents, drew forth from them a paper which seemed to be a memorandum, which he from time to time consulted, as he addressed the accused and said:

"You are Mr. Alden Lytton, attorney at law, of the Richmond Bar, I believe."

"I am," answered Alden Lytton.

"Attend, if you please, to the reading of this," said the magistrate, as he commenced and read out aloud the warrant upon which the accused had been brought before him.

At the conclusion of the reading, Alden Lytton bowed gravely, and waited.

"Mr. Alden Lytton, you have heard that you are charged with having, on the fifteenth of February of this present year, feloniously intermarried with Emma Angela Cavendish in and during the lifetime of your lawful wife Mary Lytton, now living in this State. Such marriage, under such circumstances, being a felony, punishable with imprisonment and hard labor in the State Penitentiary for a term not less than —— or more than —— years. What have you to say to this charge?" inquired the magistrate.

Alden Lytton with some difficulty controlled his indignation as he answered:

"It is perfectly true that in last February I married Miss Cavendish of Blue Cliffs. But it is a false and malicious slander that I ever at any time married any one else. It is only amazing to me, Mr. Magistrate, that you should have issued a warrant charging me with so base a crime. You could not possibly have had any grounds to justify such a proceeding."

"We shall see," answered the magistrate.

"You admit that you married Miss Cavendish on the fifteenth of last February?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then nothing remains but to prove or to *disprove* the statement that at the time of your marriage with Miss Cavendish, at Blue Cliffs, you had a lawful wife then living in the city of Richmond."

Alden Lytton flushed to the temples at hearing his true wife's pure and noble name brought into this dishonoring examination. He spoke sternly, as he inquired:

"Upon what grounds do you make this charge? Where are your witnesses?"

"The Rev. Mr. Borden will please step forward," said the magistrate.

The strange clergyman came up to the table, and stood there.

The magistrate administered the oath to this witness.

At the same moment Mr. Philip Desmond took his place at the table, to conduct the examination.

"Your name is Adam Borden?"

"Yes, sir," answered the clerical witness.

"You are Rector of St. Blank's Episcopal Church, Philadelphia?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know the accused?"

"Yes, sir; he is Mr. Alden Lytton," replied the rector, bowing gravely to the prisoner. Alden acknowledged the courtesy by a nod, and then waited with more amazement and curiosity than anxiety to hear what sort of a case they would make out against him with the aid of this man, whom he never saw before, and yet who claimed to know him well.

"State, if you please, Mr. Borden, what you know of Mr. Lytton in regard to this case."

"In the month of September of last year, Mr. Lytton came to my house in company with a lady to whom he wished to be married immediately. I conducted the pair into the church and married them there, in the presence of my sexton and his daughter. I registered the marriage in the church books, and gave a certificate, signed by myself and the witnesses, to the bride. They then left the church together. I had never seen them before, and I have never seen them since until to-day, when I see and recognize Mr. Lytton, just as I should recognize his bride if I should see her."

"Where is she?" inquired the magistrate.

"Your Worship, the lady can be produced at once, to be identified by the witness," said Philip Desmond. And he wrote on a slip of paper and handed it to a constable, who silently left the room.

Meanwhile Alden Lytton waited with constantly increasing curiosity to find out to whom he had been unconsciously married in the month of September, and in the city of Philadelphia. It flashed upon him suddenly that he *had* been in Philadelphia about the middle of the last September, and in company with Mary Grey. But he felt certain that he had never gone out with her while there; and he waited with intensely curious interest to hear how they could possibly make out a case against him.

Presently the door opened, and the constable returned, bringing with him a gracefully moving woman, dressed in black and deeply vailed.

"Your Worship, this is the true wife of the accused, produced here to be identified by the witness," said Mr. Desmond, taking the hand of the lady, and leading her to the table.

"Will you be so good as to raise your vail, ma'am?" requested the magistrate.

The lady lifted the black vail and threw it behind her head, revealing the beautiful pale face of Mary Grey.

Alden Lytton had half expected to see her, yet he could not forbear the exclamation:

"MRS. GREY!"

"*Mrs. Lytton*, if you please, sir. You have taken from me your love and your protection, but you cannot take from me *your name*. That is still mine. You have taken from me my peace of heart, but you *shall* not take from me *my name*. When you address me again, call me Mrs. Lytton, for that is my legal name."

"It is false!—infamously false!" began Alden Lytton, crimsoning with indignation.

But the magistrate stopped him, saying:

"Mr. Lytton, this is very unseemly. If this lady claims a relation to you that she cannot prove, she will do so at her own proper peril. Let us continue the examination, and conduct it with decent order."

Alden Lytton bowed to the magistrate and said—with what calmness he could command:

"This woman— No, this libel upon womanhood, who is brought here to be identified as my wife, might have rather been summoned to bear testimony against me, in any false charge she and her co-conspirators might have chosen to set up, since she is not, and never has been my wife. Her presence here cannot establish one single point in this infamous accusation. Yet I am anxious to know how she and her confederate, as I am forced to regard this witness, will attempt to do so. Let the examination proceed."

"Mr. Borden, will you look upon this lady?" respectfully demanded Mr. Desmond.

The reverend gentleman put on his spectacles and scrutinized the face of Mary Grey, who met his gaze and then lowered her eyes.

"Can you identify her as the lady whom you united in marriage with Mr. Alden Lytton?" inquired Mr. Desmond.

"Yes, assuredly I can. She is the lady, then called Mary Grey, whom I united in marriage with that gentleman, then called Alden Lytton, and to whom I gave the marriage certificate, signed by myself and two witnesses. Those witnesses can be produced when wanted," answered the Rev. Mr. Borden, with much assurance.

"These witnesses are not needed just now. They may be required hereafter. But I wish you to examine this certificate, Mr. Borden," said Mr. Desmond, putting a folded paper in the hands of the minister.

The reverend gentleman adjusted his spectacles and scrutinized it.

"Is that the certificate of marriage that you gave Mrs. Mary Lytton, the wife of Mr. Alden Lytton, on the day that you united them?" inquired Mr. Desmond.

"Yes, sir, it is," answered the minister.

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure, sir. Why, I know the paper and the printed form, as well as my own autograph and the signatures of the two witnesses," declared the minister.

"That will do. You may sit down, sir," said Mr. Desmond.

"I beg your pardon. I would like to ask that witness a few questions before he retires," said Mr. Lytton.

"Of course that is your right, sir," said the magistrate.

Alden Lytton arose and confronted the witness, looking him full in the face.

"You are a minister of the Gospel, I believe, Mr. Borden?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir. I am Rector of St. Blank's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, as you yourself know very well, having there received my ministry on the day that you *then* declared to be 'the happiest of your life,'" replied the minister.

"As Heaven is my witness, I never saw your face before I met you in this office! Now then, reverend sir, please to look me in the eyes, while you answer my next questions. Being upon your oath, you declare that on a certain day, in the month of last September, in your parish church, in the city of Philadelphia, you performed the marriage ceremony between Alden Lytton and Mary Grey?"

"I do most solemnly declare, upon my sacred oath, that I did so," answered Mr. Borden, meeting the searching gaze of the questioner without flinching.

"This is the most astounding effrontery! But attend further, sir, if you please. Being on your oath, you declare that I am the man and that female is the woman whom you joined in marriage, under the names of Alden Lytton and Mary Grey?"

"On my sacred oath, I most solemnly declare that you are the man and she is the woman I then and there united together," unflinchingly replied the minister.

For a moment Alden Lytton was mute with amazement. And then he said:

"Let me look at that paper that is said to be a certificate of this marriage."

Mr. Desmond handed over the document.

Alden Lytton read it, and then recommenced his cross-examination of the minister.

"And this is the certificate you gave the pretended bride?" he inquired.

"That is the certificate I gave your wife, sir."

"And you persist in declaring, under oath, that you solemnized a marriage between myself, Alden Lytton, and this woman, Mary Grey, here present?"

"I do, most solemnly."

"Then, sir," said Alden Lytton, flushing to his temples with fierce indignation, "all I have further to say is this—that you have basely perjured yourself to assist and support an infamous conspiracy!"

"Sir! sir! Mr. Lytton!" said the magistrate, in trepidation. "This gentleman is a most highly respected preacher of the Gospel, quite incapable of such a thing!"

"I do not care whether he be priest, bishop, pope, or apostle! He has basely perjured himself in support of an infamous conspiracy!"

"Mr. Lytton, Mr. Lytton," said the magistrate, "if you have anything to bring forward to disprove this strange charge, we shall be glad to hear it. But vituperation is not testimony."

"I know it," said Alden Lytton, trying hard to control his raging passion. "I know it, and I beg pardon of the magistrate. But this *is* a foul conspiracy against my peace, honor and liberty, and oh! great Heaven! against the honor of my dear, noble young wife! But this vile conspiracy shall surely be exposed, and when it is, by all my hopes of Heaven, no charity, no mercy, no consideration in the universe shall prevent me from prosecuting and pursuing these conspirators to punishment with the utmost rigor of the law!"

"Mr. Lytton, have you anything to bring forward in disproof of the charges made against you?" inquired the magistrate.

"No, sir; not now, nor here. I must have time to look this monstrous falsehood in the face, and prepare for its total destruction."

"Then, Mr. Lytton, I shall have to send your case to court for trial. Have you bail?"

"Yes, sir," spoke up Joseph Brent, coming forward before Alden Lytton could speak, "he has bail. I will enter into bonds for my esteemed young friend Alden Lytton to any amount you may please to name."

"The charge is one of the gravest; the position of the parties involved in it is high in the social scale; the evidence already elicited is of the most convincing and convicting character; every circumstance would seem to point to the expediency of evading the trial by flight, or any other means. In view of all the circumstances of the case, I feel it my duty to demand a very heavy bail. I fix the bail, therefore, at the sum of twenty thousand dollars," said the magistrate.

"It might be twenty times twenty thousand dollars, and I would enter it for him. A man of honor, like Mr. Lytton, falsely accused of a base crime, does not fly from trial. On the contrary, he demands it for his own vindication," said Joseph Brent earnestly.

Alden Lytton turned and grasped his hand, in silent acknowledgment of his noble friendship. Then addressing the magistrate, he said:

"I am ready to enter into a recognizance with my esteemed friend here for my appearance at court to answer this charge—this charge as ridiculous as it is monstrous."

The magistrate nodded, and directed his clerk to fill out the proper forms.

When these were completed and signed, the accused was discharged from custody.

He bowed to the magistrate, and even to the others, and was about to leave the office, followed by Mr. Lyle and Mr. Brent, when Mary Grey darted swiftly and silently to his side, and hissed in his ear:

"I swore that I would take you in the hour of your greatest triumph, and strike you down to the dust in dishonor! I have done so! I will send you to the Penitentiary yet—*felon!*"

"I think that you will find yourself there, madam, before many months have passed over your head. There are severe laws against forgery, perjury, and conspiracy," answered Alden Lytton.

Outside of the office the three gentlemen consulted their watches. It was now six o'clock in the afternoon.

Then they looked about them.

They had come to Wendover in the deputy sheriff's carriage.

That had gone. And there was no conveyance waiting to take them to Blue Cliff Hall.

"We must go to the old 'Reindeer,' and hire their hack," said Mr. Lyle.

"Excuse me, Lyle; let us walk to your parsonage first. You must give me house room there for a few weeks, for I do not wish to stop at the hotel to be stared at, and—I shall not return to Blue Cliffs, or enter the presence of my pure and noble young wife, until I shall be cleared from this foul charge," said Alden Lytton firmly.

"Not return to Blue Cliffs! Why, Lytton, you will break your wife's heart if you keep her from you in this your day of sorrow," exclaimed Mr. Lyle.

"Her heart is too heroic to be easily broken And a little reflection will convince you that, under the peculiar circumstances of this accusation, it is expedient that I should absent myself from her and from her dwelling until I shall be cleared. Now if the charge against me were that of murder, or anything else but what it is, my wife might be by my side. But being what it is, you *must* see that I best consult her dignity and delicacy by abstaining from seeing her until after my acquittal. No, I shall neither see, speak, nor write to her while I suffer under this charge."

"I see now that you are perfectly right," said Mr. Lyle.

"Yes, *that* you are," added Mr. Brent, as the three walked out toward the minister's cottage.

"I only wish you to install me, Lyle, by explaining to your good old housekeeper that I am to be an inmate of the parsonage during your absence, so that she may not take my presence as an unjustifiable intrusion," said Alden Lytton.

"She would never do that in any case," answered Stephen Lyle.

"And when you *have* installed me, I wish you and Brent to return to Blue Cliffs and rejoin your brides at once. And you, Lyle, must break this matter to my dear Emma as delicately and tenderly as you can. She does not need to be told that I am entirely guiltless of the crime that is laid to my charge; for she knows that I am incapable of committing such an one. Nor does she require to be assured of my undying love and faith. She *is* assured of that. But tell her to be of good cheer, to bear this temporary separation patiently, and to wait hopefully our speedy meeting in happier days. Will you do this, my friend?"

"Most faithfully," answered Mr. Lyle.

"And then I wish you to start at once upon your wedding tours. They must not be further delayed on my account."

"Look here, Lytton," said Stephen Lyle earnestly. "I speak for myself and also for Brent, who feels just as I do. We start upon *no* bridal tours until you are out of this trouble. We *could not* leave you in your trouble. And our girls, I am sure, *would not* leave your wife in her sorrow. So that is all over. What I have to propose is this: That I bring our Laura home here to-morrow. And that we remain here to keep you company, while Victor—I mean Brent—and Electra stay for the present at Blue Cliffs as the guests of Mrs. Alden Lytton."

"I hope you approve the plan. We talked it over and settled it all while we were in the magistrate's office attending the examination," added Joseph Brent.

They had by this time reached the gates of the pretty cottage.

Alden Lytton stopped, turned around and grasped a hand of each faithful friend. For a moment he could not speak for the strong emotion that choked him.

"God bless you!" he said at length, in a half-suffocated voice. "God bless you both! I have surely found one 'precious jewel' in the head of this 'toad'—the priceless jewel of your friendship!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

◆

—Truth is an immortal flower; a thing that has nothing to fear from circumstances, a post where danger has no power.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1872.

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ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
Corner of William and Spruce sts., New York.

An Old Convert to an Older Truth.

The *Ledger* is not only entirely independent in its politics, but, as a general rule, we omit all political discussion from our columns. Especially at present, the weather itself is hot enough without the additional heat of mere partisan excitement.

Even the Hon. HORACE GREELEY, who has been engaged in journalism almost from boyhood, and who is now over sixty years of age, and has always been noted as an enthusiastic, if not a bitter partisan, not only in his own writings, but also in the general conduct of his paper, has, within a few weeks past, and just as he was becoming the candidate of a new political organization for President of the United States, come to the conclusion that true journalism must be non-partisan, at least to the extent of being free from thraldom to any party. Mr. GREELEY announces his intention to live up to this doctrine in the future. Age should be marked by wisdom, and Mr. GREELEY'S conversion and example may not be without their beneficial influence on younger men and those just coming up as public writers.

Formerly newspapers were controlled almost entirely by politicians and office-seekers. Many county journals were conducted by practical printers, who managed them with the exception of the politics; but on public questions and elections, they were the mere tools and slaves of some ambitious lawyer or enterprising party manager, who was looking for political preferment.

The city journals were a little more pretentious, and exercised a larger influence; but they were edited, substantially, in the same way.

At the present day the conduct of a great public journal is something like the administration of a government, and all that is essential to its success is to give the news, and to take sound positions on public questions. Politicians are not essential to its being, and may be safely disregarded in its conduct.

In our judgment, at the present time people are heartily sick of politics. All that the great majority care for is to have honest and capable men in office—and they have got about tired of trying or hoping even for that.

The *Ledger* is free from politics, and men of all parties will find in it a refreshing contrast to the bitter and abusive partisan journals. We find plenty of things better than party politics with which to fill our paper.

Thought He would Try it Himself First.

On a turnpike running through the northerly part of Rhode Island, many years ago, stood a country inn, the landlord of which was noted for his eccentricity. He attended his own bar, and one of his peculiarities was, that whenever a traveller called for a drink he would nervously reply, "Yes, yes; *I guess I'll take a little myself first*;" and suiting the action to the word, he would pour out a glass of spirits for himself and imbibe it before waiting upon his customer.

He at least made it apparent that he was not afraid of his own liquors.

The precaution, if not the practice, of taking a little first himself has been adopted in England by FORDHAM, who has achieved a great reputation as a rider in races. On a recent occasion he rode the horse Digby Grand, who proved the winner. Before the race a bottle of old port wine was administered to the animal, but we are informed that "previously FORDHAM partook of a glass, in order to ascertain that the beverage was all right."

Tested in this way, "the beverage," if it had proved all wrong, instead of "all right," might only have killed a man instead of a horse! Formerly experimenting with doubtful stuff was tried upon animals. Then they were not esteemed more important than their owners.

Have Children any Rights in Street Cars?

We ask the question, because we have often seen them, when paying full fare, asked to give up their seats, or compelled to do so without asking, in favor of some adult. This is a great injustice, and we were very glad, the other day, to see a sturdy little fellow refuse to give up his seat and his rights, which he was ordered to do simply because he was supposed to be unable to maintain them. It should be at a child's own option whether he give up his seat or not in a car, when he is unprotected by the presence of parents or a companion.

A Sufficient Reason.

A man has been summoned before an English court to show cause why he should not deliver up to another a certain chest of drawers.

On the return day of the order, it appeared that the defendant was in Paris, where he had been tried as a Communist, convicted, sentenced, and was then awaiting execution.

It is to be hoped that the court, after taking due time for deliberation, will adjudge the reason sufficient.

"FAIR PLAY, BOYS."

BY REV. JOHN HALL, D. D., NEW YORK.

In many boyish games there are chances for the stronger or the smarter to get advantage of the weaker or the slower. The party in fear of suffering—feeling the danger—if not very clear about the way to meet it, often makes an appeal to the sense of justice with the cry, "Fair play, boys." To make the appeal is a real compliment. It is as much as to say, You know what is right. It is also an imputation—You are not quite doing it. One often feels inclined to shout, "Fair play, boys!"

Let it be raised, for example, when somebody's character is being torn to tatters, without his having a chance to defend himself. The other side of the story might put things in a new light. A man, for example, accused of atrocious cruelty to his wife, by striking her with his hymn-book after prayer-meeting, might be judged less severely if he were there to show that he had no wife. Hear both sides. Certainly it is troublesome, and many persons are like the Hibernian magistrate who could easily decide when he heard one party, but who complained bitterly that when a second story was heard his mind was "bothered."

Without intending to be unjust, men sometimes are so from having their *attention* wholly turned to one side. Women are likely to be one-sided in their judgments, from their tendency to intense and concentrated feeling. A late popular author who read his own works with great success, had domestic trouble, issuing in separation from his wife. A lady who heard him read, emphasized all the plaintive parts by a grumbling allusion to his supposed treatment of his wife. He was a good artist in that line, but she refused to respond to the appeal of the artist, because she only thought of the husband.

When you have a controversy do not make your opponent responsible for all the conclusions *you* can draw from his views, or what you suppose his views. There may be checks upon the working of principles, which you do not see. Besides, you are bent on finding truth. Well, find it; and do not be afraid of any consequences it may produce. So also of plans. The railways were objected to in England, because they would render horses unnecessary; the breed would die out; oats would become a drug in the market, and the farmers would be ruined. But the horses multiplied with extending railroads.

Even the most enlightened Christians sometimes miss fair play. "A, B and C hold such and such views. From them such and such horrible consequences follow. A, B and C defend all these horrible consequences." Perhaps they do not follow. Perhaps, even if they do, A, B and C do not know it. Benjamin was not as bad as he looked when his sack was opened. To be sure, there was the cup! But he did not know it. It was the steward of Joseph that put it there!

Men are sometimes very unfair in the settlement of their standard. Old people complain of degenerate times. "They are not as when we were young." But they forget the change they have undergone, and their diminished power of enjoying and hoping. A washerwoman was overheard expressing surprise at the general pity for Queen Victoria when Prince Albert died suddenly. "Hem!" said she indignantly, "greatly to be pitied! She need never wet her hands, unless she likes." The washerwoman's idea of perfect freedom from care and grief was deliverance from the wash-tub. The Mohammedans say that nothing has ever been produced equal to the Koran in style. But you ask what is the standard of excellence, and the answer is—the Koran. A drunken set of revellers had let their watches run down, and they wanted to know how the night went. There was a sun-dial in the garden; the host proposed, and the guests leaped at the idea, that they should take the candles and find out the hour on the sun-dial. Obviously they could make it late or early, as they liked. You go to the tailor, and leave your measure for a coat. It squeezes you up in your shoulders, as if you were pinioned. You gently hint the tightness. "Oh, the coat's all right; it's your shoulders that are too big!" says the tailor. Does that satisfy you? By common consent, was not your size to be the standard, when he measured you? He is thinking of his block probably; you of your shoulders.

Foul play is sometimes done by putting to your opponent's side arguments he never set up. Even Christians sometimes forget themselves in this way. A man, for example, wants a Fourth-Commandment Sunday. You at once tell him of some whims the Rabbis had about the Fourth Commandment. But he is not a Rabbi; only a plain Christian, and for the Fourth Commandment. You fling at him those sticks that a man gathered, and was stoned for. But he is not for the sticks or the stoning. They are no part of the Commandment, and were not taken to be, by Moses and the Jews. You ask him about his furnace, and why he lights a fire? But his furnace is not in the Commandment, nor anything at all about lighting a fire. All that is in another place, and for another purpose. And when he says the Fourth Commandment bids men labor and do all their work in six days, and do none of their labor and work on the seventh day—the school-boy putting away his school-books, the smith closing his forge, the manufacturer his mill, the farmer stopping his plow or his harvesting—he has a plain case, which your sticks, stones and Rabbis are powerless to overthrow.

If you want fair play, settle the definitions before you dispute; or you may argue, lose time and temper, and find both meant the same thing. An adventurous cat makes a noise down stairs. You hear it, and conclude the burglars are entering. You sally out, club in hand, and run against a man in the passage. A hasty blow; another; a scuffle; a fall; and a cry for help; and you find you have attacked and been knocked down by your son and heir, who heard the noise, set out like you, and took you for the midnight depredator, as you took him. Very awkward, is it not? What was wanted? You and he should have *defined* yourselves. That is all; and if you had, and then compared notes together, it might have been easy to define the noise, and even the cat. So, much controversy proceeds in life, even such comical result being sometimes reached as by the two men who rushed into each other's arms and found it a mistake—"You thought it was me, and I thought it was you, and it's neither of us!"

Who Owns those Boys?

Can anybody tell from whence such scores of little boys come the moment any unusual occurrence takes place in the streets of New York? For instance, a carriage stops at a door with a mattress laid upon the cushions. An army of urchins instantly appears and surrounds the door. The curiosity of the young visitants is unappeasable. "Anybody sick?" "What's the matter of 'em?" "Where are they going?" "Who did it?" Questions like these are poured out from every side, and no policemen can keep the questioners at bay till that carriage disappears, when they all vanish as inexplicably as they came, till another unusual occurrence again calls them forth. Those boys must live somewhere and belong to somebody, and the question is, Who owns them, and where are they fed, clothed and housed?

—Is there any *religious* journal in the country which teaches more unexceptionable rules of conduct than the *Ledger*?

HOW TO DO IT.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

BALTIMORE, April 30, 1872.

DEAR SIR: You will confer a great favor upon me, if you will give your advice upon the following subject.

We have a large and somewhat influential church. Our choir is too weak to lead the singing effectively, and a large portion of our congregation believe an organ would be an advantage. But, on the other hand, some of the older members of our church are prejudiced against it. Now, shall we proceed to secure an organ despite the opposition of said members? or would it be better to wait until they die off, or remove?

By answering this through the columns of the *Ledger*, you will greatly oblige, etc."

This is not merely an Organ question. It is as broad as society and human nature. It is simply a question in practical psychology. How shall we persuade men to do what they do not want to? to believe as we do, and they don't? to yield their judgment to ours?

The District vote to build a new schoolhouse. One party want it on the east side of the Pine hollow; the other party want it on the west side. Each side thinks the other wrong-headed and obstinate. Is there any receipt which will enable one side to prevail, which will not equally avail with the other—thus, by a double victory, merely changing places?

A bank is instituted. One-third of the stockholders want Mr. Takeitall to be president. How shall they persuade the obstinate two-thirds to yield?

In a church some want a quartette, some a full choir, some a precentor and congregational singing. Some want one book, some another. Every town has scores of questions every year which divide the opinions of good citizens. Every church is obliged to get along by a wise management of differences of wish, taste and opinion.

In general, men yield to reason, provided it is fairly appealed to, and the angry feelings kept down—especially an angry conscience.

If men's consciences once get mad, any matter in debate may as well be laid aside till good-nature returns and conscience is not so fierce.

Men must not be crowded nor browbeaten for differing with you. Even when they are manifestly wrong, patience with them and gentleness are far more likely to remedy their error than taunt and ridicule.

Take pains to supply men with information; listen to their objections, and remove them without wounding their pride. Even prejudices are to be treated with patient consideration. Do not press things with undue haste. It takes time for a community to ripen. Gain a little, and then a little more, and keep steadily and kindly at work, and the fruit which you could not beat off the bough in August, will fall into your hand of itself in October.

And now for the particular case before us, the introduction of an organ. Can you not procure some discreet man in whom "the older members" have confidence, to preach on church music, and on the noble position which the organ may be made to hold? It should be a matter of thankfulness that the grandest and most consummate instrument which the world has perfected is distinctively a church instrument, and dedicated to the service of religion. Let the money for the organ be raised. Treat those who do not wish an organ, not as members of another party, but with courtesy and respect. Finally get a vote of the congregation, and go ahead.

Waiting till men "die off" is a rather tedious operation. Your turn may come first. Begin your campaign relying on the strength of your cause. Keep your temper. Keep at work. Dig as if you were getting out stumps. At length you will eradicate the sturdiest opposition, and, when the organ peals forth your victory, you will enjoy it in the degree in which you have worked hard for it.

WHAT SPRING IS TO US.

Oh the glory and beauty of each new spring! The delight with which the first blade of grass and the first dandelion blossom are hailed, as they struggle up through the city pavements, and seen by the eager, watching eyes of the invalid, who will no longer be a prisoner between the four prisoning walls of his sick chamber; to whom the sweet flower-laden breeze brings healing on its wings, and rest, and promise of bright future days this side of the grave. The long, weary nights are shortened now that the stars look kindly in through the open windows, and the faint musical shiver of the leaves is heard like friendly voices, as the night breeze stirs them.

And oh, what a wealth of beauty will the long summer days bring us, in their glorious sunrises and soft sunsets, and the flowers that open and shut between. Then the soft, fleecy summer clouds, and the shifting shadows, and the purple light of the far-off hills, and the silver brooks, like beautiful, quiet, serene lives, making no noise, but bringing verdure and fragrance and beauty wheresoever they pass.

To the poor as well as the wealthy comes all this golden store of beauty, and though they may not regard it artistically, yet the quiet, soothing hand of nature cools the pulse of labor, and softens the harsh tones, and makes the evening hour, when, by the cool starlight upon the door-step, the baby is hushed to sleep, one of blessing and happiness.

Winter indeed has its pleasures, but mainly to the rich; to the poor its grasp is that of iron. Thank God, then, for the beautiful, open-handed, bountiful Spring!

FANNY FERN.

Is Insanity a Good Ground for Divorce?—Devoted Husbands.

[From the Poughkeepsie Press.]

No disease seems more evidently to come from the hand of God than that of an unsettled and unsound mind. God often makes, as it would seem to us, the mind of the most intelligent and vigorous among us as helpless and weak as that of a child. May the one who is the nearest and dearest to us then leave us? Can the one who is the most solemnly pledged to love and to cherish us in sickness as well as in health, forsake us and break all his promises to us in this hour of our need and sore trial?

The writer of this was in company the other day with two of the leading clergymen of this city. One of them told us of an acquaintance of his, whose wife was insane for twenty years. A little before her death her senses returned to her perfectly. Her dear husband had watched over her with great tenderness and love through the whole of her suffering, and they had the most delightful enjoyment in the company of each other for over a month before she died. If he had left her, if he had been with another, how would it have been with them?

Many of our citizens will remember Mrs. Currie, of the Washington Garden. She used to wear at the church a straw bonnet, large enough, on the front part, to cover the heads of two or three ladies, and her other clothing was as strange and unusual as this bonnet was. She sometimes frightened away ladies who went to her kind husband for flowers, and even men, by her strange looks, her singular ways and threatening words. But Mr. Currie never reproved her, but said "my dear" to her at every word. He never appealed to the pity of his disturbed and scared lady customers, never spoke of her as his burden, which Providence was calling upon him patiently to bear. He did not seem indeed to know that he had a burden, or that he was doing some great thing. He loved her and cherished her in this sore and painful sickness some quarter of a century, and until death did them part.

GRUNDYISM IN LOW LIFE.

BY REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

There is such a thing as conventional wickedness.

People not only follow the fashion in dressing their heads and carpeting their floors, and celebrating their bridals and their burials, but also in lying and squandering and stealing.

It seems absurd for human beings to rule even those acts of their lives which do not involve moral principle by no law but custom; to inquire always, not what is beautiful, or what is fit, but what is fashionable. The reign of Mrs. Grundy over our clothes and our furniture, our domestic enjoyments and our social relations, is felt by those in whose characters some traces of individuality are discoverable, as a most irksome tyranny; yet most of us submit without protest, and the great multitude never dream of resistance.

It is worse than absurd, though it is by no means uncommon, for the same bad potentate to extend her sway over a realm which should be always free from her intrusion. She is prone to claim authority in morals and in religion; to erect her customs into laws for the conscience; to drape the decalogue with her conventions, hiding from sight its most solemn commands; and even to give to worship the cultus and the atmosphere of her court.

We have "fashionable worship" in these days! Any of the reporters can tell you where to go to find a stylish congregation, and artistic praise, and elegant prayer and gentlemanly preaching; there are plenty of churches in which "the most fastidious" are always found, and where nothing ever occurs to offend them.

But if fashion has usurped over society a sway that is absurd, and over the church an authority which is revolting, she has also taken possession of the kingdom of vice and crime, and rules like a despot even in that degraded realm.

It is sometimes imagined that the individuals who belong to what are commonly called the lawless classes, are entirely free from constraint, and enjoy a boundless liberty.

When a young man casts off the gentle bonds of parental authority, and the restraining influences of respectable society, and joins himself to the outcasts and debauchees—to those who fear not God, neither regard man, and whose lives are spent in setting at defiance all the requirements of morality and law—he is very apt to talk a great deal about his liberty. He has been in bondage long enough; now he is going to be free.

In due season he discovers his mistake. The society into which he has entered has its requirements; it lays upon him continual exactions; and its demands are often quite as burdensome as those of the better life from which he has fled.

I stood, the other day, in a crowd upon a Fulton ferry-boat near two lewd young fellows of the baser sort who were recounting to each other their various misdeeds. One of them told of a furious spree upon which he had lately been; how he and a companion of his had stolen a boat from an old fisherman who had befriended them, and sailing in it to a neighboring port, had sold it, and then had gone carousing with the money; and it was plain, from the tone of the narrative, and from the responses which it called forth, that these young men did more than half their deviltry in obedience to a bad sentiment which prevailed among them, and which required of them just such exploits as these. It was the fashion in their circle to perform all these despicable and dastardly deeds, and they dared not refuse to follow the fashion. Their sins must be partly charged to sensual appetite and partly to a love of mischief, but largely also to the conventionality which required young men of their set to come up, or rather down, to a certain standard of wickedness.

"I made more than five hundred dollars while I was in Boston," said one of them.

"How did you make it?" inquired the other.

"Shoe-making," was the reply.

"And did you spend it like a man?"

"Every cent of it," with an expletive which may as well be left out.

It was the voice of Mrs. Grundy sounding through these depths. "The proper thing to do," in that company, was to spend every cent that could be earned or stolen. He was not accounted much of a man who ventured to open an account with a savings-bank; the scourgings of ridicule and contempt were quickly visited upon any young man who hesitated to squander with open hand his wages as well as his booty.

There can be no doubt that these wicked conventionalisms must be irksome oftentimes to the people who are ruled by them. The pressure which is put upon men who are travelling in courses of vice or crime, forcing them to go further than their inclination leads them, and rudely trampling down the promptings of their better natures, must be very hard to bear.

The young man finds, to his consternation, sometimes when it is too late, that the liberty he looked for when he left the ways of virtue is not to be found in the paths of vice; that not only are his appetites bad masters, but the society into which he has sunk has its own inexorable customs and laws; that he has exchanged his father's mild reproof and his mother's gentle pleadings for the sneers and taunts of boon companions, who goad him on toward a deeper degradation, and hold him in the ways that lead down to death by the strong cords of a tyrannous fashion.

Absurdity of the Gambling Record—We Must Have Something Better.

[From the Turf, Field and Farm.]

We have said, and we repeat it, that Christian gentlemen cannot understand why the pool box should be made an essential feature of the race. And if we have not said it heretofore, we say it now, that these gentlemen also cannot understand why there should be no public record but that which partakes of the nature of the gambler's test. For the decision of bets it may be well enough to stipulate that the record shall be acquired in a race for money, since both the wager and the race come under the head of speculation; but it is rather dogmatic, not to say demoralizing, to insist that no performance shall obtain public recognition unless the performance is made to satisfy a wager. If the track is a public one, the performance in a measure public, the weights of the required standard, and gentlemen of honest worth in the timing and judges' stand, the horse should not be denied the credit of doing whatever the judges report he has done. Let us suppose a case. Col. Amasa Sprague has two horses. One of them in a race for $5,000 at Prospect Park wins a heat in 2:20; another at a matinee given at Narragansett Park, with Mr. Edwin Thorne, Col. H. S. Russell, and Hon. K. C. Barker in the judges' stand, and some forty or fifty friends of these gentlemen present on the grounds, trots a mile properly rigged in 2:16. There is no money at stake, no wager to decide, but the performance is fairly and squarely done. Now, when Col. Sprague speaks of the relative speed of his two horses is it logical, is it reasonable, to insist that he shall ignore the 2:16 and credit only the 2:20? Those who worship past traditions, who cling to old customs whether right or wrong, may throw reason and logic to the dogs, and say yes; but if we do not grievously err, the intelligent gentlemen and true sportsmen number few indeed, who are so prejudiced as to trample on reason for the sake of an absurd custom. Custom is not infallible, and it is the duty of the reformer to sweep away every absurd or pernicious custom, even if it is hoary with age.

If we can judge anything from the letters which reach us, and from the voice of the press, the sentiments which have been repeatedly advanced by the *Ledger*, and are maintained in the above extract from the *Turf, Field and Farm*, are generally concurred in.

BEHIND THE BARN.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

Why do you stay, grandfather,
Behind the barn, in the sun,
All day, till the orchard shadows
Go over you one by one?
To watch how the brook goes merry,
To see how the warm brown rift
Is left, as the plow goes onward
Where apple-tree blossoms drift?

I'm facing the sunset, lassie;
And here, in its glad bright glow,
Come shadows of old times, lassie,
Bright shadows of long ago.
The days that are gathered, lassie,
Seem waiting to meet me, dear,
And voices beloved, but silent,
Are whispering softly here.

I see a New England Sabbath
Hang over yon hill-tops three;
A boy in his Sunday jacket
The sun watching wearily.
And when it sinks in the twilight,
The rogue, with a bound and cry,
Exults in the Sabbath ended—
Alas! and alas! was it I?

I see, through the rosy summer,
True lovers walk home this way,
Where only the birds can listen
To fond, foolish words they say.
I see cheeks pink as the blossom
Held up but to shame their hue;
I hear a poor lad's confession
Of love. It was tender and true.

I see how a brain-worn doubter,
Misled by the pride of youth,
Comes here with the sombre twilight,
To wrestle for Light and Truth.
I hear, like a sighing presence,
The cry of a spirit torn;
I hear, thank God! Alleluia!
The shout of a faith new born.

So here, in this homely shadow,
I come from the friendless street;
I know, as I know not elsewhere,
What company here I'll meet.
Here watch till the golden sickle
Shall gather me safe and nigh;
For hands that are scarred, but sinless,
Shall garner me by and by.

"SPRING IS HERE."

So says the almanac above my writing-desk; so say the velvet-coated "chicadees" busy at the meat I have hung for them from my maple-trees; so say the warm rain-drops trickling from the eaves in the light of the noonday sun; so said a phœbe bird, in the woods below the garden, just two days ago.

Spring is here. Soon will these level white roads and fields give place to ploughed furrows and to thoroughfares of mud. Soon will the dry branches of the trees before my window, on which a withered leaf or two of the last season still shivers in the blast—soon will those branches swell once more with the ascending sap, and bud and blossom with beauty. The blue violets will steal upward through the sods of the meadow lands; the golden dandelions will gem the verdant grass; the robin and the blue-bird will be forever on the wing; brooding hens will cackle and sing comfortably in the barn-yard, and the young lambs will follow their mothers up and down the hills. All will be song and sunshine, and eager, bright young life.

All, did I say? Nay, in some homes there will be silence, and the darkness that is left by the shadow of Azrael's wing. Some mother must look out into the opening year with tears and sighs for the little feet that will chase the butterflies, the little hands that will gather the primroses and buttercups no more. Some wife must go sorrowfully out into the pretty flower-garden which her lover husband planted, and take its choicest blossoms to scatter on his grave! Some child must put aside, with tearful eyes, that old arm-chair in which the helpless form of a father or a mother will never recline again! Some woman, stricken to the heart by the loss of that heart's best treasure, which was hers in secret, if not openly before the world, may lay her forehead in the dust, and mourn that loss, throughout the bitter mockery of these bright spring days!

The year is coming to us all alike, with its gifts of sorrow or of joy. To one it may bring full measure of delight; from another it may snatch "even that which he hath." It is all allotted to us even now, although we know it not, and we can only bear in silence whatever the blow may be.

Last year, when the spring came, I looked upon many a familiar face that will look upon me here on earth no more. Often has the grave opened in the midst of my home, and close at my very feet, during the past twelve months. I am yet here; but who shall say for how long? So it may be with you, my reader—so it most likely *is*; for we have all learned ere this that "the green earth is but a place to dig graves upon," and that those whom we love the most tenderly are the very first to die. So these spring days have sadness in them, and a faint foreboding of deeper griefs to come. Only in our careless childhood can we face the new year without a dread of that which it may bring. It is not so with me or with you, my reader, now. Life has passed with us into the minor key. We look no longer for happiness; we ask but for content, and are by no means sure of winning that. But, ah! let us hope that it may come to us, in spite of the sad surprises of the past; let us hope that it may be ours at length, and that no new grief, no sharper sorrow may mar for us the pensive loveliness of these fair spring days.

M. S. G.

Retribution.

A resident of Alabama, who arrived there from England about three years ago, having become estranged from his own wife and very attentive to a neighbor's who lived a couple of miles from his plantation, resolved to remove to Texas, if he could get his neighbor's wife to go with him. His plan was to abandon his own wife on the way, and he pitched upon New Orleans as the place to leave her. When he broached the plan to his neighbor's wife, she was shocked beyond expression, and immediately informed her husband. The latter, of course, was in a towering rage, and resolved upon revenge. The offender, foreseeing the coming storm, sought to evade it by flight. But he was followed so closely he could not escape, and he and the enraged husband had an off-hand pistol fight, in which both were badly wounded; but the wrongdoer got much the worst of the combat, and it was supposed he would die from the effect of his wounds. The avenging husband had the sympathy of the entire community on his side.

Doves as Messengers.

When NOAH sent a dove forth from the Ark and it returned with an olive-branch, it was the welcome bearer of glad tidings, and the olive-branch seems to have been regarded, ever since, as the emblem of peace.

Doves of late years have become more important as the bearers of tidings of war. Does this indicate that the human race is degenerating? We see this most peaceful little bird converted into an instrumentality of death and destruction.

The favorite carrier-pigeons at present are the Belgians. The London *Telegraph*, in an account of a prize show, says:

"The utility of homing or messenger pigeons was established during the last war; and now the Belgian birds, that used not to cost more than four or five francs, are scarcely to be purchased for six times the sum. The fact is that all the Prussian fortresses have been duly supplied with pigeons of this serviceable kind; and France and Germany together have bought up nearly all the 'winged couriers of the air' in Belgium.

IN THE SUGAR BUSH.

BY FRANK J. OTTARSON.

Ho, for the maple-tree tall, boys!
  Of the forest the pride and the king,
Most orchards yield fruit in the Fall, boys,
  But the maple we harvest in Spring.

Ho, for the sugar bush now, boys!
  Ho, for the spout and the trough!
Ho, for the bunk of green boughs, boys!
  The boiling and sugaring off.

Last night a light sprinkle of snow, boys,
  Was followed by glistening frost;
This morning is warm, as you know, boys:
  Pull up! there's no time to be lost.

Now for the buckets and yokes, boys;
  This business, you know, is not play:
No time for old sledge and old jokes, boys,
  The trees are all gushing to-day.

Ho, Buck and old Bright, jog along now;
  You must haul in the harvest ere night:
No time for a smoke or a song now—
  The buckets are overfull quite.

Now pile on the logs and fill kettles,
  The stars are beginning to peep;
Bunk down on the rude wooden settles,
  But don't you be falling asleep.

'Tis the very last sap of the season,
  And a bountiful one it has been;
'Twas all we could wish for, in reason,
  Then let us be thankful as men.

To-morrow the work will be ended,
  And gathered each spout and each trough;
Then labor and play shall be blended,
  In the wind-up and sugaring off.

There's snow in a ravine right handy,
  Where the lasses molasses can cool;
And boys may a while play the dandy,
  And the older ones—they play the fool.

And names will be strung in the snow bank,
  By girls with more feeling than care;
And all shall draw prizes, for no blank
  The fun of the day shall impair.

We'll finish the whole with a dance, boys,
  In the genuine countrified way,
And all the old fellows shall prance, boys,
  For the season is over to-day.

Then ho, for the maple so tall, boys!
  Of the forest the pride and the king;
The apple and peach for the Fall, boys;
  The maple we harvest in Spring.

MARK HEBER'S LUCK;

OR,

Life on the Plains.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY MAGICIAN," "RED KNIFE," "THE BROKEN HOME," "EDDY'S SEARCH," "THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FIGHTING AND PRESSING FORWARD.

As indicated by their recognition of Mark, the three outlaws had advanced to within a short distance of his halting place.

"Halt, there!" suddenly commanded the young man.

The outlaws continued to advance, exchanging jeering ejaculations with one another.

"Once more—halt!" shouted Mark. "You are fairly warned. Go your way, and let me alone. Halt, or I shall fire!"

The trio mocked and jeered again.

"You won't dare fire upon us," muttered one of them. "We'll kill you if—"

The sharp report of Mark's rifle followed, and the foremost of the outlaws tumbled from his saddle, without a cry or a gesture—dead!

Mark's ball had passed through his heart.

The young man was still on the ground, at the very spot where he had dismounted, and he had accordingly taken the best of aim.

"Let that suffice," he called sternly, as he placed himself behind his horse. "I have no quarrel with you—no wish to harm you. But you must let me alone. If not, I have another ball for you!"

The two ruffians had halted abruptly, as had the horse of their fallen companion, and they looked in wild terror from Mark's upright figure to the motionless form on the ground at their feet.

Then they broke out in a volley of fierce curses.

"He's done it!" cried one hoarsely.

"I wouldn't have believed it," returned the other. "He's fixed out Pegger!"

"Mebbe not. We'll see."

Both slipped to the ground, and made a hasty examination of their fallen comrade. There was no mistaking the meaning of that rigid, ghastly face, the inertness of the stiffening form, or the evidence of the red tide of life which had ebbed from the fallen man's breast.

"He's done for, sure enough!" breathed one, in a voice nearly crushed with rage and consternation. "The young whelp really means it!"

"And he knows how to handle his shooting iron, it seems," sneered the other. "He's evidently been practicing since he crossed the Missouri."

They completed their examination and straightened themselves up, placing themselves under cover of their horses, with low, furious growls.

"You see that you have made a mistake—that you have taken the wrong road," said Mark, as he finished loading the barrel he had discharged. "Let the mistake go no further. I was in possession of this spot when I saw you approaching, and here I shall remain until it suits me to vacate. But you are free to bury your dead. You won't wish," he added, "to leave him to the coyotes and wolves."

The two men looked at Mark again, and then at each other. The silence all around them was such that their breathing was clearly audible.

"Well, this beats me," soon muttered the taller of the two ruffians.

"Never saw nothing like it," was the rejoinder.

"But he's right about burying Pegger," resumed the former speaker. "A good feller was Pegger, in his way, and I don't feel like leaving him to them infernal coyotes!"

"Nor I. We must bury him."

Dropping to their knees, they began pawing in the light, yielding soil with both hands, while their horses began cropping the few thin tufts of grass that grew here and there in the shelter of an occasional stunted bush. The weapons of the two outlaws lay near them while they were thus engaged, and they cast frequent glances at Mark, who stood as motionless and silent as a statue.

"A sorry business this," muttered one.

"Rough—rough!" was the response. "Pegger was one of our best men. The Cap'n 'll miss him."

"And we must avenge him!" declared the first speaker, lowering his voice to a mere whisper, and glancing obliquely at Mark.

"I don't know about that," said the other, with a visible display of caution, as his glances took the same direction as his companion's. "Fact is, it was Pegger's idee to attack the young whelp. And it was a foolish idee, as you've seen."

"But you wouldn't go back on one o' the boys, Ike!"

"No, Rube."

"Then I say we oughter do for this young hound what he has done for Pegger."

"True, we oughter; and there's many a thing we oughter do that'll have to go undone, and the little job you propose looks like one of 'em. Fact is, the thing isn't so easy. You've seen for yourself what sort of work that chap can turn out."

"Pshaw, Ike! That was a lucky shot—one o' ten thousand. He couldn't shoot like that agin."

"You may think so, if you choose, but that chap is lucky enough for anything. Didn't he thrash Burk? Didn't he even lash Blue Jack? In short, isn't he the luckiest chap that ever swung a bull-whacker?"

"We're to let him run then?" sneered Rube.

"We'll see about that—when present business is finished."

A considerable trench was already formed in the ground, and it was quickly extended to the dimensions of a sufficient grave. The fallen outlaw was relieved of his weapons, and the body was then placed in the hole and covered under at least a foot of earth, which was pressed down compactly upon it.

Then the couple again consulted.

"You had better ride on," called Mark, who perceived by a few words that reached him that they were plotting and planning against him. "You will make nothing by remaining. It'll be no easy matter for you to get the better of me. I took my life in my hand days ago, and I don't consider 't worth a penny," he added bitterly and gloomily, "but I shall defend it to the last extremity. Go your way and leave me!"

The couple whispered together a moment, and then Rube responded:

"We prefer to stay here."

"Very well then," said Mark, with the promptness of a flash of light. "I shall leave you. My horse is rested, and so am I. We'll go on a short distance, with a view to grass and water."

He seized his picket strap and jerked it abruptly, and the hooked stick at its end, which had been thrust firmly into the sands, came flying upward. Then Mark, still keeping to the cover of his horse, began retreating quietly.

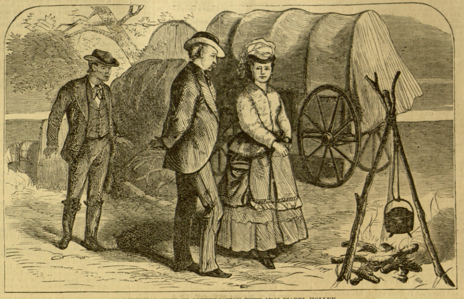
The two ruffians seized their rifles, and sprang toward their horses.

"One final word," said Mark, with an awful sternness, as he looked back at the couple. "Don't follow me! Don't trouble me further!"

He cocked his rifle, slinging it into the hollow of his left arm, and resumed his retreat, with the same quiet manner with which he had begun it.

The outlaws again exchanged glances.

"He means it, you see," said Ike.



GOVERNOR KENT IN CONVERSATION WITH MISS ISABEL HOLLEY.

"Yes, he means it. But he's that same Mark Heber who has already made us so much trouble. Blue Jack would give the best ten years of his life for the whelp's capture. We haven't accomplished anything very brilliant lately, and here's a chance to do something. Besides, we are two against one, and *I* don't hold myself the inferior of any man living!"

"Nor do I, Rube—"

"Then we'll follow him."

"Very good. Heave ahead!"

They suited the action to their words, leading their horses, which were followed by the horse of their fallen companion.

Mark set his teeth hard together.

"The poor fools!" he ejaculated.

He was already some twelve or fifteen rods from the couple, and he suddenly leaped into the saddle.

The next instant he was dashing away at full gallop.

"I will avoid them, if I can," he thought. "They are not worth the killing. Perhaps I can outride them."

Several shots were fired at him, and one of them whistled in dangerous proximity to his ears, but his mood was too desperate and gloomy for him to care for them, and he pressed on faster than ever.

For a few moments he hoped to give his enemies the slip, but at the end of that time he saw that they were gaining rapidly upon him. They had mounted promptly, after discharging their rifles, and their whole mien attested that they had yielded to the many passions hounding them on, and were fully determined upon Mark's death or capture.

"Very well—since they will have it so," he muttered, after assuring himself that they would soon overtake him.

Drawing rein abruptly, he slipped to the ground, took aim at the foremost pursuer, and fired.

The bullet missed—by a few inches only perhaps—but it missed.

"You see?" cried Rube exultingly, putting spurs to his horse and dashing forward with the speed of a hurricane. "He misses us! It was merely his luck before. Now pour it into him!"

Still dashing forward, they emptied their rifles at Mark, whose horse fell dead under the volley. It was only because Mark had again covered himself with the animal that he escaped the death intended for him.

As it was, however, it was now Mark's turn again, and he availed himself of it promptly, taking aim again at the foremost pursuer, and discharging his second barrel.

A yell of pain followed, and Rube fell from his saddle, his horse bounding forward with the increased speed of affright, and passing within a few rods of the spot where Mark had halted.

"The whelp!" groaned Rube. "He's put a ball through my right arm, breaking the bone! It's an awful job for me! He's maimed me for life! Quick, Ike! Cover me with your horse, and with that extra rifle!"

Ike hastened to comply.

"What's Heber doing now?" then asked Rube.

"He's loading his rifle."

"Can't you get a crack at him?"

"It's doubtful. Fact is, he's crouching behind his dead horse."

"I'd try him, any how. We have our revolvers to fall back upon, and a horse between him and us."

"Very good. I'll try him."

He passed the bridle of his horse to Rube, took deliberate aim at the small portion of Mark's figure that was visible, and discharged both barrels of his weapon in rapid succession.

"I've killed him," he cried jubilantly, as the smoke of the discharge lifted.

"You have?"

"Yes. He's fallen. I see nothing of him!"

"Well, that don't prove anything, with such a customer as Heber. That chap has all the cunning of a Blackfoot! Ten to one he's lying in the sand, with his finger on the trigger of his rifle, and with his eye fixed upon us, waiting for us to rush into easy range. Before you stir a step, Ike, you just reload that weapon."

Ike acted upon the injunction, while his wounded comrade proceeded to bind up his arm, protesting that it was shattered in pieces, and groaning most dismally.

"Now load mine," added Rube.

It was done.

"And now that extra rifle—Pegger's."

The third rifle was promptly loaded.

"And now catch Pegger's horse and mount him," rejoined Rube. "I'll mount yours."

The couple were soon again in the saddle, although every movement cost Rube a groan and a curse.

"And now to ride the whelp down, living or dead," said Rube savagely. "I can handle my left arm cleverly, and between us we can settle him."

With this they advanced in terrible array, making up in ferocity and resolution all that they lacked in strength.

As they drew near Mark's dead horse, however, they saw that Mark was not there. The truth was, Mark had crept away upon his hands and knees, after reloading his rifle, and had vanished.

"Where is he?" asked Rube, halting.

"I don't know, but here's his trail—where he's crept away in the sand, rifle and all."

"Yes, and it leads toward the spot where I last saw my runaway horse, and—"

"Destruction! there he is now!" cried Ike. "He's caught your horse and mounted. See!"

Rube had only to look in the direction indicated by his companion. He saw Mark, some fifteen rods away, and gnashed his teeth with rage.

"Oh, my arm!" he howled. "I'll be revenged, or die. This horse of Pegger's is the best of the lot. We can ride the whelp down."

"Come on then."

They dashed forward together.

Mark took one good look at them, and endeavored to get out of the way. He had not ridden twenty rods, however, before he realized that he was again in danger of being overtaken.

"Surrender, you young hound!" thundered Ike. "Surrender, or I'll fire upon you!"

"Fire away," cried Mark derisively.

A bullet whistled near him, and then another.

"That call is a little too close," muttered Mark. "I shall have to turn again, to forestall those other rifles."

Again he drew rein, and slipped from the saddle, and again he took deliberate aim at the foremost pursuer, who continued to advance rapidly, and gave him the contents of both barrels.

One or other of these shots took effect in the breast of the outlaw's horse, and the animal reeled and fell, pitching his rider over his head.

"There, I think that settles you," called Mark, as he saw what he had done. "I have the honor to wish you good-evening."

And with this Mark remounted, and rode quietly away, disappearing under the soft shadows of the night, so radiant with moon and stars.

Just as he was vanishing, Rube rode up to the spot where Ike had been dismounted, and half slipped, half fell from his saddle.

"It's his luck, curse him!" he growled. "Oh, my arm! It makes me as weak as water. It's the luck of that hound to hunt us and kill us and get off without a scratch. Talk about skill, experience, and nerves, and all that! It's luck—downright luck that ails that Heber. And he'll continuer on his shining road of success straight up to glory, Ike, while you and I tumble down to perdition. Oh, curse him! curse him!"

He sank down upon the sands, gasping for breath.

"Then you can ride no further at present, I take it?" demanded Ike, after uttering a fresh volley of curses.

"No. And we have only one horse between us. I must see to my arm first of all things."

And so the couple were left mingling their groans and curses, while Mark pressed on into the Indian territory, knowing only one hope and one resolve—that of rescuing Gay Heber from her enemy.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOME CURIOUS INFORMATION.

We will now narrate the adventures of Burk, the outlaw, who, it will be remembered, had been dispatched by Blue Jack to the southward with twenty Sioux warriors, to attack and plunder any wagon train that might be found upon the route between Kearney City and Fort McPherson.

These warriors, as has been said, were in a state of sullen discontent, owing to their losses of men at the two-river settlement known as Heber, and to their utter failure to obtain any profit to themselves out of that nefarious expedition. The Devil Chief had deemed it expedient, in order to maintain his reputation among the Indians to whom he was allied, that these savages should return to their villages in good spirits, bearing plunder, rather than they should go back sullen and angry, to reproach him with the wasted lives, and perhaps excite a feeling against him throughout the whole Dacota nation.

In this he acted with his usual ability and foresight. The warriors, under Red Adder and the white man Burk, became more hopeful and warlike as they advanced southward, boasted of their deeds of prowess, and were in excellent spirits.

As there are always more trains going west than in the contrary direction, and as these westward-bound trains usually carry many valuables with them, the property of emigrants, it was decided to attack a train going west.

Burk was to join the train at Kearney City as an honest traveller, and journey with it a day or two, ascertaining the amount of valuable plunder in the train, with its hiding-places, if possible, and to continue with the train until the Indians attacked it. He was then to aid them in their task of plundering, that it might be accomplished in as brief space of time as possible, and with the greatest possible ease.

Accordingly, when within a day's journey of Kearney City, Burk took leave of the Indians, after giving them orders, and rode on alone.

He arrived at his destination about nightfall of a sultry August day, when the chill night winds began to contrast with the heat of the previous day, and went to a hotel, registering himself as Mr. John Smith, a stock rancher, on his way home to Colorado.

No one questioned him by what route, nor in what company he had come, as a wagon train was encamped in the neighborhood, and it was supposed he had arrived with it.

The next morning at an early hour, soon after daybreak, Burk strolled out to the camp of the wagon train.

He found that it contained nine ox wagons, ten men, suitably armed, and a due proportion of women and children. It was on its way from Omaha to Denver.

Burk went through the camp, ingratiating himself with the conductor and leading emigrants. He represented himself as Mr. John Smith, of Mississippi Ranche, Colorado, who had come to Kearney City with a wagon train, on business, and who was now waiting for a wagon train, in whose convoy to return home.

This explanation being perfectly in course, Burk was well received, and was invited to join the train, which the conductor informed him was to be detained until the arrival of another train, to make up the necessary complement required by law, no train with less than a certain number of wagons, men and weapons, being allowed by the train inspector to pass beyond Kearney City, on account of the danger to be apprehended from Indians.

Burk joined the train that very morning, with his horse and equipments.

Upon the evening of the same day, a wagon train arrived at Kearney City from Leavenworth, having twelve wagons and fourteen men, with suitable arms. There were in this train also a number of women and children. It was also bound for Denver.

These two trains having the same destination were joined into one, which set out upon its slow journey westward upon the second morning after Burk's arrival at Kearney City.

Burk rode his horse, and there were other riders, but they were obliged to subdue their steeds to the pace of the easy-going oxen and mules, whose highest rate of speed averaged some sixteen miles a day.

At noon they made their halt for an hour upon the south bank of the Platte.

After resting and eating, the march was resumed. At nightfall they again halted and kindled fires, prepared supper, parked the wagons, put horses, oxen and mules in the inclosure thus formed, and made their bivouac for the night.

After supper the emigrants gathered in groups and talked; the young people played on the prairie near to the camp, and there were lovers who strolled apart and gathered flowers, and rehearsed the old, old story that is always new, and which seems to gather new force and beauty when told upon the infinite plains, under the glorious blue dome of heaven, in the midst of an awful solitude in which the human heart reaches out to heart with a tenderness and yearning experienced nowhere else, it may be, in all the wide world.

Burk strolled from group to group, listening to scraps of conversation with greedy ears.

At length he approached the conductor, who was deep in discussion with the most distinguished personage in the train, a Governor Kent from New York, a gentleman of great ability, high social position, of well-known nobility of character, an ex-governor, who had recently represented his native State in the Senate of the United States.

Burk sauntered near enough to hear Governor Kent discuss some political question with the conductor, and he surveyed the distinguished statesman with a keen and furtive glance.

He already knew that Governor Kent had come up with the train from Leavenworth, that his health had suffered from too close application to his public duties, and that, by the advice of his New York physician, he was making a trip upon the plains with the view of recovering his strength.

The ex-Governor and Senator was a gentleman of grand and noble bearing, past sixty years of age, with iron-gray hair, and with a heavy gray mustache shading his mouth. He had a broad and massive forehead, heavy with thought, thick white brows, and underneath them a pair of keen, dark-gray eyes. He was tall and large, with broad chest and haughty carriage. Already the fresh winds of the plains had bronzed his face, and kindled anew the fire of life which had seemed to burn low within him, and he was the picture of mental and physical health and vigor. Burk was impressed with his grandeur of appearance, his stateliness, and the old-fashioned courtesy of his manners.

"A regular nob!" thought the outlaw. "An out-and-out tip-top high-life 'ristocrat! It'll take him down some to be scalped to-morrow night, I reckon. He must have money somewhere. I wonder if he's got much along with him. He don't wear a ring nor a shirt-pin. I'll do the handling of *his* saddle-bags! I'd like to speak to him."

This desire was presently gratified.

The Governor, finishing his discussion with the conductor, surveyed the groups of emigrants in the hazy twilight, in the red light of the fires, and at length moved nearer to Burk. The outlaw stepped aside, raising his broad-brimmed sombrero respectfully.

The Governor was about to pass on, but paused, and addressed Burk with pleasant courtesy. The desperado looked half hunter, half rancher, and the Governor, who was studying Western character, with much enjoyment and admiration of it, believing Burk to be what he seemed, said smilingly:

"A pleasant evening, sir."

"It's an A 1 evening, sir," responded Burk, with an odd attempt at politeness. "Stars are shinin'. No sign of rain, though we do have busters now and then, when you drown if you lay down, and are struck by lightning if you stand up. Seen any of our real prairie soakers, Cap'n—I should say Gov'nor?"

"Not yet," said Governor Kent, smiling, and thinking he had stumbled upon an odd type of Western character, and not more than half liking Burk's sinister eyes, yet blaming himself for his prejudice. "Do you live on the plains, sir?"

"Yes, sir," declared the outlaw. "My name's John Smith—not an odd name, sir, by no means. I live at Mississip' Ranche, a few miles below Denver. Like to show you my place, Gov'nor. Going to Denver?"

"My journey westward terminates at Denver," said Governor Kent. "I shall stop there a week or two, and then return to the States. My principal object in coming out on the plains is accomplished. My health is re-established, and I feel like work again. I have a secondary object in visiting Denver. I have a friend there, a wealthy land speculator, the owner of an immense tract in the South Park of Colorado. I think he has an office and a residence at Denver. I hear from him at intervals, and he speaks of being at Denver much of the time. Are you acquainted in Denver, Mr. Smith?"

"Well, I reckon," replied Burk. "I know about everybody there, white or black, Injun or Chiny."

"Then you may be able to give me some information concerning my friend," said the Governor. "I have asked the conductor and others who have been at Denver, but they have never heard his name. He is a gentleman of ability, and is sure to make himself known in one way or another. His name is Edmund Holley."

"Edmund Holley!" repeated Burk slowly, shaking his head. "I don't seem to remember the name, and yet I know all the rich ranchers by name. Edmund Holley! What sort of chap is he, Governor?"

"He is an educated gentleman, a graduate of Harvard College," said the Governor, sighing. "He must be nearly forty years old, has black eyes and hair, and is one of the most daring men I ever knew. He comes of a rich old Boston family, and is a man to make his mark. He came west some ten or twelve years ago, in consequence of domestic affliction. It is years since I have seen him. I shall be greatly disappointed if I am obliged to return without seeing him."

"You'll find him easily enough, Gov'nor, if he hangs out at Denver," said Burk. "There's a young lady in the Omaha section of the train that I heard spoken to as Miss Holley. She's going to Denver. There she is yonder, Gov'nor—the tall girl with the black eyes and hair. She may be able to give you the information you want."

Governor Kent looked in the direction indicated by Burk, and beheld a tall, handsome girl, standing full in the red glow of the firelight. She was dressed in a rich blue silk gown, peculiarly inappropriate for the rude life on the plains, and had wrapped about her a long rich cloak of finest ermine, to guard her against the evening chill. A black lace vail was thrown carelessly over her head, after the fashion of the Spanish women.

Something in her appearance struck the Governor as strangely familiar. Her face was round, and dark in complexion, with the rich ripe bloom of the red damask rose in her cheeks and lips. Her eyes were black, and there was a metallic hardness in them which might be observed at nearer glance. Her hair was black and abundant, and was worn in braids that crossed her head like a crown.

Obeying a sudden impulse, the Governor approached her. In that free, wild life, where so many families are as one, with the conductor for its head, during so many days and nights of travel, formal introductions are by no means considered indispensable. Miss Holley knew the Governor by sight, as did every one in the train, and drew herself up, both pleased and flattered, as she saw that he meant to address her. Burk came near, and stood apparently unconcerned, but he listened intently to every word that followed.

The Governor took off his hat to her, as he said:

"I beg your pardon, my dear young lady, but I understand that your name is Miss Holley, and that you are on your way to Denver. I am also on my way to Denver, with the idea of visiting a friend of mine, a wealthy land speculator, who has a great tract of land in Colorado. It is possible that you may be a connection or relative of my friend, and I have ventured to address my inquiries to you, no one else in the train being able to render me any information."

"My name is Isabel Holley," said the young lady, with some affectation of manner, "and my father is a wealthy land speculator, who has an immense tract of land in the South Park."

"My friend's land is located there," said the Governor. "It is possible that you are some relative of his. My friend's name is Edmund Holley."

"Why, how very singular!" drawled Miss Holley affectedly. "Papa's name is Edmund Holley!"

Governor Kent started in surprise. He regarded the young lady with increased interest.

"That is certainly a coincidence," he remarked. "My friend comes of an old Boston family, and was educated to the law. He was a graduate of Harvard, and practiced law for some years in New York."

"So did papa," affirmed Miss Holley. "It is more than a coincidence, Governor Kent. It must be papa for whom you are inquiring. He came West some ten or twelve years ago, and engaged in land speculations. He went East for me four years ago, and brought me out to Omaha, where he placed me at school. He is going to take me back to New York as soon as he comes into a large fortune which has been kept from him for many years through the machinations of some person, I don't know whom."

The Governor looked at Miss Holley with increasing surprise.

"I should like to see your father, Miss Holley," he said. "Indeed, I must see him. Are you travelling alone?"

"Not entirely alone, sir. I am in company with a school-mate and her father, who are also going to Denver, and beyond. I am eighteen, and I desired to leave school, so I joined my friend in her trip over the plains. Papa does not dream that I am coming. He has not written to me very lately, and I fear he is ill. It is terrible to think of him living all alone on that great ranche, with no one to take care of him in sickness. And so I'm going to him. He won't be angry with me for coming to him uncalled for. He has never let me come further west than Omaha, and he has said that he would soon take me East to live in great style. Papa fairly adores me, Governor Kent, and I can't help thinking how he'll open his eyes when he sees me. He'll be amazed, fairly thunderstruck!"

"Is your mother living, Miss Holley?" asked Governor Kent.

"No, sir; she died in my early childhood."

"Pardon me," said the Governor, "but I am impelled to ask you a few other questions, which I beg you to answer. I feel almost a conviction that your father is my friend, and yet I cannot see how that may be. Did your father marry again after your mother's death?"

The manner of the Governor was so respectful and unobtrusive that Miss Holley could not take offence at the particularity of his questions. She replied to him frankly, with the wish to identify her father, of whom she was vastly proud, with the friend of the distinguished statesman.

"Papa married a second time," she acknowledged, "but I do not remember the lady's name. She was of a New York family. I was a little child, among my mother's relatives, and far too young to know anything or to understand anything about his second marriage. It occurred fifteen years ago, and I was then but three years old. Papa's second wife was a widow, with two children. The marriage proved an unhappy one, I believe. The lady's boy was accidentally killed, and she went insane, and wandered off no one knew where, carrying her little girl with her. I don't know what became of her, or whether she is living or dead."

A great agitation possessed the frame of Governor Kent. He tried to speak, but he could not.

Miss Holley wrapped her ermine cloak closer, and did not notice the Governor's emotion.

"It's her fortune papa's waiting for," she said complacently, shifting the bracelets on her arms. "She was very rich, and all her property comes to papa, only some stingy old fellow is keeping papa out of it, under the pretence that the lady or her child may still be alive. But I don't see why papa need wait for that money. He's immensely rich. He lives like a prince on his great estate. He has servants without number. I am dying with impatience to see the grand home he has built in the wilderness, half castle and half palace. I've told you a great deal about papa, Governor Kent. I don't see how I came to be so confidential to an utter stranger; but, of course, one cannot suspect a gentleman of your position of mere curiosity; and then again, I am so sure that it is papa for whom you have been inquiring. What will papa say to see me arrive in company with a friend he knew at the East, and a friend of your social position, Governor Kent? Do you think that the Edmund Holley you knew is my father, Governor?"

"I—I think so," answered the Governor, trying to control his voice, and looking beyond Burk, who stood within earshot, an unsuspected but excited listener. "You have been very unreserved, Miss Holley, and your confidence demands confidence. Listen. I will tell you what Edmund Holley is to me."

Miss Holley looked interested, and prepared to listen.

"I had an only son," said the Governor, in a low voice, freighted with pain, "named Eldridge Kent. He married early a beautiful girl, whom he left a widow some three years later, with two children, a boy and girl. The young widow married a second husband a year after my son's death. That second husband was Edmund Holley!"

"My father?"

"It seems so. I am inclined to believe that you are the child of the Edmund Holley I knew, by a previous wife, whom he probably married in Boston. Soon after the marriage of Gabrielle, my daughter-in-law, to Edmund Holley, she made a will leaving her entire fortune to be equally divided between her children. In case of their death before the attainment of their majority, her property was to go to her second husband, a very natural and very common arrangement. It was not long after making this will that Gabrielle's boy, a bright little fellow of some three years, was accidentally killed. His stepfather, Edmund Holley, was riding through the grounds, and little Eldridge ran into his very pathway, and was trampled down under his horse's feet."

The Governor's voice faltered here. He could not continue for some minutes.

"I acquit Edmund of blame," he said at last. "He is a distant relative of my own, and I would as soon suspect myself of blood-guiltiness as to suspect him. But Gabrielle's second marriage had not been happy. The shock of her boy's death unsettled her reason. She accused Edmund of murdering the boy, and in her sudden insane terror of him she fled upon the very night of her boy's funeral, carrying her little Gabrielle in her arms. I was in Washington at the time, and was ill. When I recovered, and was able to join in the search for Gabrielle and my little grandchild, they had disappeared as if from the face of the earth, and left no clue to their fate. Edmund believed that Gabrielle had drowned herself and her child. I could not share his belief. I am alone in the world, Miss Holley, and I cling even now to the hope that my young granddaughter may close my eyes for me in death. She is all of my near kin, if she lives—my only descendant. It is because I thus hope, because sometimes the conviction comes to me that I *shall* find her, that I have withheld from Edmund Holley my daughter-in-law's estate!"

"But I am sure the girl must be dead, and the mother too, Governor Kent," said Miss Holley, with some regrets for the expression of "stingy old fellow" which had so recently escaped her, and which she now saw applied to her companion.

"I believe that the mother is dead, or in some asylum," said the statesman. "But the child I believe that I shall some day find. Little Gay! I should know her by her resemblance to her mother. She had her mother's features even in her babyhood. I loved her more even than her brother. Edmund was disappointed because I refused to believe in Gabrielle's and her child's death, and because I refused to pay over to him his wife's fortune, inherited from my son, her first husband. He came West after a year or two, and bought land and became rich. He has visited me once or twice since then, and has sent me letters. We are friends, and I shall be glad to see him."

"I hope that when you do see him, Governor Kent, that you will pay over to him his wife's fortune," said Miss Holley, with a calm eye to business. "You are cherishing a forlorn hope in thinking you will ever find the child Gabrielle, or her mother. Both are dead. You would have heard of them long ago, if either had been living. I am very glad I dared come on to Denver without waiting for papa's consent, for I hope I may be the means of advancing his interests with you, sir."

Governor Kent shook his head sadly.

"I must wait a few years longer," he said softly, more to himself than to her.

"Won't papa be astonished to see me walking into his land-office at Denver, in company with Governor Kent?" said Miss Holley gleefully. "I wrote to him, begging him to allow me to come to him with the Lefflers. Jenny Leffler is my school-mate. But he has not even answered my letter, which made me think he might be ill. He is usually prompt about writing. I am so impatient to get to him, Governor!" she added. "Do you think there is danger of an attack by Indians on the way? And oh, do you think that there is any danger of our meeting that hideous, horrible Blue Jack we heard so much about at Kearney City? I should die at sight of him; I know I should."

"I hope we shall not meet the Indians, nor Blue Jack either," said Governor Kent. "I should fear the bloodthirsty outlaw more than the savages. He is a very demon, I hear."

Burk grinned, as he looked afar off over the plains.

Miss Holley shuddered.

"Jenny Leffler's father says he is cruel, pitiless and wicked—a desperado of the desperadoes. He is a terrible being," said Miss Holley. "He is the husband of an Indian woman, and he is called among the Indians the Devil Chief, because he is more devil than human."

"I have heard much concerning his exploits and career," said the Governor thoughtfully. "He is like a blast of consuming fire. He nearly killed Lieutenant Fallon of Fort Kearney. He stabbed the conductor of a wagon train at Kearney City, in June last. He has been fighting a little settlement beyond Fort McPherson, I hear. He has been nearly lynched a half score of times. But I won't talk further of him to you, Miss Holley. Your face is white and scared now. We shall not meet Blue Jack, nor need we fear Indians. Our train is well armed and manned."

Miss Holley was reassured by the Governor's calm and confident manner.

The next morning the wagon train resumed its course westward.

The next night it encamped at a place called the Warm Springs, a spot that had been appointed by Burk as the point at which the Indians were to make their descent upon the train.

The evening came on, cool and pleasant, with a bright starlight. By ten o'clock the fires were out, the wagons parked, the animals in the inclosure, the emigrants all asleep with the exception of the guard. Burk was also awake, watchful and vigilant.

He had not many hours to wait.

About midnight, the cry rang through the camp like a trumpet's blast—the cry that thrilled every bosom with terror, startling men, women and children from their sleep—the cry of "Indians!"

How the shout thrilled through the night!

"The savages are upon us! The Indians! The Indians!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

TAKING POSSESSION.

BY W. O. STODDARD.

"You'll be sure to come to our sugaring on Tuesday night?" said Deacon Andrews to pretty Mrs. Bergen, as they met at the steps of the meeting-house door, that Sunday morning.

"To be sure I will," replied the little blue-eyed widow. "Is it true that the maple orchards are yielding so?"

"Yes'm, the biggest flow and crap I ever heerd on, and I reckon my trees hev done their level best. 'Pears like they took a genooine interest."

"Well, then, I must come."

"And don't forgit to fetch Dolph Sandford with you. He's an orful onsartin young man, onless some one looks him up."

"Oh, I'll just take possession of him and bring him," merrily replied the widow, as she tripped away.

"Reckon that's about what she's done with the whole lot of 'em," muttered the Deacon, as he looked after her. "She's pooty, and she's quiet, and I like her some, but she twists old Miss Sandford right around her finger, and Dolph, and the farm, and everything on it. She's a wonderful little woman, for a far away relation. I wonder how old Squire Sandford would have took to it, if he'd been alive? Dolph's like his father a good deal, too."

And the good Deacon shook his head as he climbed into his sleigh, and drove out of the village toward his own big farm on Sugar Hill. As for the village itself, it was the county seat, and had no end of local self-esteem and uppishness; and although Squire Sandford had been one of its big men, his son Dolph had not yet made out to fill his place in popular esteem. Some said he was "too bookish," others "too proud," and not a few thought secretly less of a man who seemed unable to be master in his own house. Poor Dolph! He had hardly felt himself master of anything, ever since his mother invited Deborah Bergen, her cousin's orphaned and widowed daughter, "to come and keep her company."

And yet Mrs. Bergen had done everything so cleverly and sweetly and unobtrusively. Old Mrs. Sandford felt as if she could hardly live without her, and the neighbors had about made up their minds that neither she nor Dolph ever would. "Pity, too, for there were nice girls in the village, and Dolph was a right down good fellow."

As for Dolph himself, with all his bookishness and reserve, he had not been altogether blind to the meshes of the net that was closing about him, very nice and pleasant as Mrs. Bergen had so skilfully made them. That Sunday he had not gone to meeting, but, in spite of the March thaw and the bright sun, had lounged about at home, with more on his mind than he would have been willing to tell just then. A little piece of news he had lighted on the evening before, had stirred up his thoughts in a manner altogether unusual, and it was very much in connection with the sugaring on Tuesday evening. As for Mrs. Bergen, she never dreamed of any necessity of speaking to Dolph until late in the afternoon of the day.

"The sugaring?" he replied, to her matter of course question. "Oh, yes; there's enough snow yet for the cutter to run. I'll be ready right after supper, unless you want to go before."

"Oh, no," said the widow, "your mother don't care to go, but we'll have supper early. There'll be such a crowd there, any how."

All was evidently going to Deborah Bergen's liking, and she never smiled on Dolph more sweetly than when she curled down among the soft robes of his cutter, with intent to be driven to the deacon's, and to monopolize her escort when she got there. It was only three miles from the village, and Dolph seemed in an unusual flow of spirits.

"Now, Mrs. Bergen—" he said, as they drew near their destination.

"Oh, Dolph, don't be so formal. Please call me Deborah. You ought to, by this time."

"Well, then, Deborah," said he. "When shall I come back for you?"

"Come back? Why, you don't mean your're not going to stay for the sugaring? Why, Dolph!"

"No, Deborah; this is my French evening, you know, and I mustn't give up my class, for I've made up my mind to spend my summer in Europe. We need French there, you know."

The "we" struck pleasantly on the widow's ear, but she replied:

"You'll be all alone at your class; and what if old Monsieur Vivat comes to the sugaring?"

"Oh, well, I'll be back in time to take you home. Guess I'd better not go in."

They were at the door now, and hardly has the widow entered the house and Dolph's sleigh-bells jingled away, before Deborah's eyes fell on old Monsieur Vivat, the philological glory of the village academy, and she knew that poor Dolph would be disappointed. Still she thought:

"If we could only make our trip to Europe! He can afford it, and it would be splendid. But I wish I could make him speak out."

If Dolph Sandford called at the lodgings of his teacher, it was as much to satisfy his conscience as anything else, for he then drove elsewhere at a remarkably rapid rate. And yet that evening was one of the most important studies of his whole life, and there was one verb that he conjugated over and over again.

"Now, Miss Bergen," said old Deacon Andrews, "where's that Dolph of yours? You promised to bring him. I like Dolph."

"And so I did bring him—to the door; but he drove off to Monsieur Vivat's. He's crazy over his French, and all that."

"Oh, then he'll come back in a little bit," said the Deacon. "Turney, my boy, where's Prudence?"

"Oh, I've got to go way back after her. We had such a load of our own girls, and she wasn't ready. I can go and come in half an hour."

It was more than an hour later before it occurred to the Widow Bergen to wonder why Job Turney had not started after his city cousin.

"Prudence won't forgive you if you make her as late as this," she said.

"Can't help it," said Job. "I don't care much for city girls. If they can't be ready in time, they must take the consequences."

Job colored to his ears, however, even while he spoke, and got away from the widow as soon as his country awkwardness would let him.

It was ten o'clock before Dolph again made his appearance, and his proprietress almost immediately took possession of him. The fun had been excellent, and never had better sugar been made of maple sap. Job Turney's red hair was half full of it, and there was evidently a terrible combing time before him. Dolph was made to understand, very clearly, that his own presence had been the one thing lacking to the evening's enjoyment—so clearly, and plainly indeed, that his heart almost smote him for his absence.

"If there isn't Prudence Turney!" exclaimed the widow. "Job must have run his horses every inch of the way. Why, it's a mile to their house!"

"All of that," said Dolph. "What a sweet girl she is! Don't you think so?"

"Oh, nonsense, Dolph. You don't know women as I do. But what have you been doing all the evening? Not studying French?"

"Yes, but I have though," he said, "and I'm making splendid progress."

Anything like a prolonged tête-à-tête was out of the question in all that hubbub, but the widow knew she would have Dolph all to herself on their way home.

"If I can only make him speak out," she said to herself. "He's always been so distant and reserved, and he calls me Mrs. Bergen more than half the time. I don't feel half settled yet. Of course there's no danger, but something *might* happen, for Dolph is away so much lately, with his wretched studies and classes. But then, if we're to go to Europe!"

And so, when at last even the sweetness of maple sugar had palled on the merry company, and old Mrs. Andrews had fallen asleep in her chair, and the Deacon almost ceased to urge his guests to stay later, Deborah Bergen once more took possession of Dolph Sandford's cutter and buffalo-robes, and, as she had predetermined, of Dolph himself.

"Dolph, dear," she said, as they slipped smoothly along behind the jingling bells, "how is it about this European trip? When is the best time?"

"Well, the fact is," replied Dolph, "I couldn't quite make up my mind until this very evening. June is the best time, but Prudence had to wait till she could get an answer from her father and mother."

"Prudence?—Father?—Mother?" exclaimed the bewildered widow.

"Yes; the letter came to-day, and now that's all right. I think I am safe to say we shall go in June. Prudence talks French like a native. I've learned twice from her what I have from old Vivat. I suppose it came easier. You and mother won't be lonely at home until we come back, will you? We mean to be here before next winter."

"Prudence Turney!" exclaimed the widow. "Then Job didn't go for her!"

"No, she came with me. Job and I understood each other. Don't you think we've managed splendidly?"

"Splendidly!" said the widow. But Dolph Sandford thought he heard a low, *gritting* sound, as of teeth.

WHAT BECAME OF IT?

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

Mr. Truefitt was in a passion. And when a middle-aged man, with gray whiskers, a bald head, and a deep bass voice, flies into a passion, the effect is apt to be rather appalling.

"I'm sure, sir, I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Sedgewhistle, the landlady, meekly.

But Mr. Truefitt went on, without paying the least attention to his landlady's meek accents.

"I've always heard, ma'am, about the last straw breaking the camel's back," he mumbled out, "and this is an exemplification of it. Not enough, ma'am, to take down the stoves and take up the carpets, and deluge everything with soapsuds, and give me such a cold in the head that—that I feel as if Niagara Falls was roaring away inside of my left ear, but you must make away—no, Mrs. Sedgewhistle, I insist on your hearing me through—with a certified check for *one hundred and fifty dollars!* Just as good, ma'am, as so much money in minted gold!"

"I'm sure, sir," whimpered poor Mrs. Sedgewhistle, "I never so much as thought of such a thing."

"Then, ma'am," growled Mr. Truefitt hoarsely, "what *did* become of it? It hadn't legs, ma'am, and it couldn't run away; it hadn't wings, and therefore it could not fly. Nobody was in my room but you, and—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted Mrs. Sedgewhistle; "Lucy Jenison came in to get your shirt and sew the button on. But Lucy, sir, she's a well brought up girl, and she wouldn't touch what wasn't her own any more than—"

"Then *where* is it?" bawled Mr. Truefitt, whirling round in the middle of the room like a human humming top.

"That's just what I don't know, sir," began Mrs. Sedgewhistle, "but—"

"I give you warning, ma'am," cried Mr. Truefitt. "Twenty-four hours' notice, Mrs. Sedgewhistle! I can't submit to this sort of thing, and I won't!—Lucy Jenison!"

A pretty, fresh-faced girl, with brown eyes, and a red, sensitive mouth, who had come to the door with a message for Mrs. Sedgewhistle, started and colored at the sharp summons.

"What do you know about the check?" began Mr. Truefitt sternly. "The check that has been spirited away so remarkably; the check that was on my table yesterday afternoon, and—"

"Nothing, sir," faltered Lucy, turning pink and white, and beginning to tremble all over. "O, sir, what should I know of it? I just came in for a second—only long enough to take your shirt from the bureau drawer, and then to put it back again. I didn't even look at the table."

Mr. Truefitt felt his chin reflectively.

"It's a black business," said he, "and all that keeps me from calling in the help of the police is my ridiculously soft heart. You, ma'am"—to Mrs. Sedgewhistle—"are a widow, and you, Lucy Jenison, are an orphan that works for a living. Consequently I shall not sue; but I shall leave this establishment at once!"

Mrs. Sedgewhistle sat despairingly down on the stairs, Lucy Jenison began to cry, and Mr. Truefitt shut his bedroom door with a bang that resounded from attic to cellar.

Mr. Timothy Truefitt kept his word. He packed up his belongings, and left the Sedgewhistle domains. But the next day he came back after a vest, which he persisted had also miraculously disappeared.

"Dear heart alive, sir!" cried poor Mrs. Sedgewhistle, fairly driven desperate; "what should we do with your vest? There are no men folks to wear such things in my family, and we don't keep a store for second-hand things!"

"It must have got somehow misplaced in your—your confounded house-cleaning operations!" shouted Mr. Truefitt, whose voice generally ascended as his temper decreased.

"Well, sir, you may search the house with a warrant, for what I care!" groaned poor Mrs. Sedgewhistle; and Mr. Truefitt went grumbling away.

Two days afterward he came again, in a towering passion, after a missing pocket handkerchief.

"I had twelve, with horses' heads printed on the border, and 'T. Truefitt' in the corner," said he—"twelve new pocket handkerchiefs, and now there are only eleven."

"I ask you, sir," said poor Mrs. Sedgewhistle, with tears in her eyes, "what could *I* do with a pocket handkerchief bordered with horses' heads and marked with your name?"

"That's a question, ma'am, that I don't pretend to answer," replied Mr. Truefitt. "But I *do* say that this whole business is assuming an aspect *most* extraordinary!"

And away he went, gesticulating and muttering wildly to himself.

After this a sort of blight seemed to come over the not very promising, at best, circumstances of Mrs. Sedgewhistle. One by one her boarders dropped away, and no new ones presented themselves to populate the vacant rooms. Lucy Jenison's customers, too—she was a neat little dress-maker, in an unassuming way—fell off sadly, for no palpable reason. People looked doubtfully at the landlady and her little friend, and somehow contrived to steer clear of them. For the first time in her life, Mrs. Sedgewhistle failed to meet her landlord's quarterly demands, and listened dismayed to his avowed intention of putting up a bill. While poor Lucy, who had nothing to do but twirl her pretty thumbs, began to wonder how she was to live!

"It's all that old Mr. Truefitt and his abominable check, my dear," sobbed poor Mrs. Sedgewhistle. "People won't come to a house where things have the name of mysteriously disappearing, and that's the long and the short of it. And whatever we're going to do the Lord knows, for I don't."

And Lucy's tears were her only answer.

But the old proverb says that "it is always darkest just before daylight," and so in this instance it proved. For that very afternoon there came a coleric, red-faced old East Indian, with an express wagon full of valises, bath-tubs, air-cushions, and other outlandish bachelor contrivances, and engaged the whole second floor "right straight through," as Mrs. Sedgewhistle ecstatically declared.

"The front room for himself," said she, "and the back room for his servant, a queer, brown man, with a white night-cap of a thing on his head, and big gold hoops in his ears."

"My goodness gracious!" said Lucy Jenison.

"So now, my dear," went on kind-hearted Mrs. Sedgewhistle, "it an't of so much consequence if you don't pay up that odd bit of rent just yet; and who knows? There may be better times ahead."

Lucy shook her head softly.

"Nobody will employ me now," she murmured sorrowfully. "They all think I am a—thief!"

"Don't fret, Lucy," soothed Mrs. Sedgewhistle. "As soon as ever I've seen his things straightened a little, I'll put over the kettle, and you and me'll have a cup of tea together."

The prolonged and vehement ringing of the front-room bell interrupted her.

"Land o' liberty!" she gasped; "he certainly *will* break that bell wire!"

And up stairs she rushed, to find the old gentleman dancing up and down in a blue cloud of smoke, and the native servant sneezing until it seemed as if his rolling coffee-colored eyeballs would fly out of his head!

"Pack my things up again, Wollah Rany!" shrieked the old gentleman. "Ma'am, why the deuce didn't you tell me the chimney smoked?"

"But the chimney *don't* smoke, sir," persisted the landlady, in direct contradiction of the evidence of the senses.

"What do you call *that*, ma'am?" barked the old gentleman, while Wollah Rany doubled up in a fresh paroxysm of coughing.

"But it never acted so before!" cried Mrs. Sedgewhistle. "I do believe it's bewitched!"

The old gentleman began to fling his bootjacks and linen miscellaneously into a yawning trunk which stood conveniently nigh. Mrs. Sedgewhistle caught a broom, and considerably to the relief of the coffee-colored servitor, who thought at first she intended to attack him, made at the chimney aperture above the grate, full of sulking coals and kindlings.

"It was swept only a year ago," she declared, "but— My stars! what's this tucked up the draught? Why, it's a waistcoat! and here's a pocket handkerchief, bordered with blue horses' heads; and, bless us and save us! here's the check!"

And like a maniac Mrs. Sedgewhistle tore down stairs, waving her treasure-trove in her hand, and out into the open street, toward the tall brown house where lodged Mr. Truefitt at that present time, having "changed" six different times since he left the Sedgewhistle roof.

"I've found it, sir," she shrieked, rushing into his presence.

Mr. Truefitt bent over his newspaper, and comprehended the situation in an instant.

"Where was it?" he asked.

"Up the chimney."

"O-o-o-h!" said Mr. Truefitt, after a moment's silence. "I remember now; I put it there myself."

"You put it there yourself, sir?"

"To be sure I did. You had just been cleaning house, and the floors were damp, and the carpets were up, and the stoves were down, and there was a beast of a draught, and I remember catching up the first thing that came handy—a man don't stop to consider, ma'am, when he jumps out of bed in the middle of the night, with his bare feet on a board floor—and ramming it up chimney. Never thought of it afterward, ma'am, I give you my word. Mrs. Sedgewhistle!"

"Sir?"

"I'll take your third floor front, if it's not engaged."

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Sedgewhistle, beaming.

"And, Mrs. Sedgewhistle, tell that pretty little Jenison girl to make me five dozen shirts."

"Five dozen, sir! That's a great many at one time."

"No matter. I shall wear 'em all out, if I live long enough," roared Mr. Truefitt.

And so the puzzle was cleared up, as puzzles always are, if we only wait long enough.

THE COST OF A PARTY.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

"I declare it is *too* mortifying!" exclaimed a brilliant brunette, throwing aside the morning paper with an impatient gesture.

"What is, Jennie?" asked the gentle looking girl beside her.

"Why, just to think *every lady*, with any pretensions to respectability, has given a party this season but us! I declare, I am truly ashamed to accept any invitations, as we have not returned the politeness, nor have any prospect of doing so. I don't know *what* papa is thinking about. Whenever I've spoken about it, he has given me not a bit of encouragement. And I'm just going to take the matter into my own hands. I will ask him just *once* more, and if he does not agree, I *will* have a party if—no matter *what it costs*," Jennie replied, with a determined look on her handsome face.

"Jennie, don't talk so! Have you not noticed that the lines of care on father's face have deepened much lately? I know all is not well with him. He is troubled, I see plainly, and is striving not to cast the shadow of it over his family. If he could have given you a party, you *know* he would have done so long ago. When did he ever refuse us any pleasure he could bestow? He has been *too* indulgent, I fear, and we too extravagant. I heard Mr. Barnard say, last evening, that many of the oldest firms in our city were tottering, and the proprietors would have to be very skillful to weather the financial storm. I fear papa may be among those anxious ones. Don't worry him, Jennie, dear," pleaded the younger sister, her fair, sweet face growing sadder, as Jennie quickly answered:

"Oh, nonsense! It is nothing of the kind. Papa is growing penurious, and wants to economize. Saving money is what he is up to."

"I think he is up to more than that, Jennie. Saving his name and honor—"

"There, stop, Gertie! I don't want to listen to a sermon on that subject. I've known papa to get these spells before. I am *determined.* Mamma will not object, I know. So a party I'll have. But here is mamma now."

Mrs. Halstead, entering, inquired concerning the subject under discussion. Jennie repeated what she had said to her sister, concluding with:

"Now, mamma, don't you think we might manage to give one? I've a particular reason for wishing it just now."

"I hardly think we can, Jennie. I've noticed your father's depressed look. He is worried about something, and I would not like to ask him now."

"Mamma, might we not manage it without asking him?" Jennie asked, with such a sweet, pleading expression in her dark eyes, as she leaned her head caressingly on her mother's shoulder, and whispered:

"I should like *so* much to have Captain Lovell see *me* do the honors. He was admiring Ada Lawton's dignity and grace the other evening, when she presided at her party."

She blushed a little, and looked so lovely, her mother felt disposed to help her favorite child, yet scarcely knew how it could be done.

Jennie saw she was yielding, and said:

"Mamma, I have fifty dollars. If you had as much, we could pay Gilbert that on the supper in advance, and he would gladly wait for the balance three or six months."

"I have a hundred, that your father gave me this morning to pay several little bills. Perhaps they might be put off—that is, a part of them, those not so pressing. But you forget the music."

"O dear, yes! Twenty-five more, that must be paid at the time. Couldn't you spare *that*, mamma?"

"I must pay twelve to Bridget I owe her for last month, and here this is nearly gone. I must hold her, which I cannot do if I do not pay her. Then your father told me to be sure to give fifteen to John."

"Oh, mamma, divide the twenty-five between Bridget and John, and let us have the party. Papa need not know anything about it until it is on him, and he won't worry over what he cannot help. You'll never regret it, you darling mamma! And we won't mind what it costs," Jennie said, then in a happy mood, having succeeded in winning her mother to her will, she knew.

George Halstead sat in his counting-room, a weight of care plainly visible on his sad face. He was evidently waiting for the coming of some one. At length the door opened, and he arose to meet the visitor, saying:

"Thank you for coming, Walton. Courtesy would demand my seeking you; but you understand me. I thought you would. Here you can say things to me perhaps you would hesitate to in your own house. Six months ago you lifted the burden from my mind and heart. I told you, with your relief I could stem the tide. To-day I am a ruined man. Difficulties have increased on every side. I can neither meet my liabilities to you or others, although Heaven knows how hard I have striven. In ten days at furthest the crash must come."

"Halstead, I have seen its coming. I must be plain with you. And you would have more sympathy when this is known, had the extravagance of your family been less manifest."

A half-suppressed groan escaped the miserable man. His friend went on:

"It would be more cruel to withhold this than say it to you. You are keeping up an establishment of magnificence scarcely justifiable in a man of millions. Your wife and daughters are the most elegantly and expensively dressed women in town. Your boys—"

"Stop, stop! in mercy stop! To one you are unjust. Gertrude—"

"Yes, I should have excepted her. I know she is a noble girl. Have you talked with her?"

"No, no; I could not bear to grieve her loving heart any sooner than necessary. Walton, I would willingly die to save them from this trouble. In truth now, at times, I fear I shall go mad. I have not sent for you to ask for any delay; it would not help me; only to make an assignment of all my effects to you, as a preferred creditor. What may be left you will do the best you can with."

"Stop a moment, Halstead. What amount would save you?"

"Not less than twenty thousand dollars."

Mr. Walton remained in deep thought several moments. Then raising his eyes to his friend's, he said:

"Halstead, that sum I will place at your command this day week, if you will promise me to make a radical reform in your household. Make your sons dependent on their own exertions. See that they obtain no credit. And make your wife and daughters understand the trouble you are in. Do this within the week, and you are saved. Take my counsel, and in less than five years you will be a free man."

"God bless you, Walton! my more than friend! I will do it. You who will save me shall counsel and guide."

"Very well; I shall be a stern master. You will find me ready, when you are. Cheer up now. Good-bye. I've an engagement at six."

Mrs. Halstead and Jennie had fully decided upon the party at any rate, and when her father returned home that evening, his face wearing a more hopeful expression, Jennie whispered:

"I told you nothing was wrong with papa. See how pleasant he looks!"

"Mother, wait a while. Don't give up to Jennie's whims. You know, if father was not in some trouble, he would not have refused Jennie, when she asked him to let her have the party," said Gertie.

But her pleading was useless. Preparations went on for a grand party. Jennie triumphantly said, "Fortune has favored us," when her father told them he should have to go to B—— on business, to be absent three or four days, possibly longer.

"Let me find you all home when I return, at furthest, Thursday evening. I want to have a council of peace, I hope," he said, smiling pleasantly, when he bade them good-bye.

"We will all be home," Mrs. Halstead and Jennie replied, while Gertie stole out after her father, and winding her arms around his neck, said:

"You have been looking so worried lately, father! Are you feeling better now?"

"Yes, yes, little one. It was a passing cloud. Things look brighter now. I will tell you all when I return, and shall want your help, my best child. Now run in."

Invitations were issued for Thursday night. That night George Halstead had fixed to disclose to his family his exact circumstances. Two days after, Mr. Walton would fulfill his promise, and then all would be well.

Never did Jennie Halstead look more beautiful than when she stood, smiling, and conscious of the admiring gaze from eyes in whose sight she cared alone to triumph.

The magnificent rooms were filled to their utmost capacity. It was decidedly the party of the season.

The band was playing one of Straus' beautiful waltzes when Jennie, supported by the arm of Captain Lovell through the dance, raised her eyes to the door. There standing—the palor of whose face frightened her then, and haunted her ever after—was her father.

Gertie, who, resisting the combined efforts of all, refused to join the merry throng, was watching for his coming.

She drew him with her far away into an upper room, off from the company, and there, through the night, strove to calm the fevered state into which the shock had thrown him.

The next morning, when Gertie, seeing him somewhat relieved, threw herself down for a few moments' rest, a servant, never dreaming of the mischief he was doing, bore to Mr. Halstead the note which Gertie found after, and which somewhat explained the sad sequel of our story. This it was:

"FRIEND HALSTEAD — Last evening's event proves clearly you have not the firmness, possibly not the disposition, to do your duty. Why should I try to save you? You need depend no further on my assistance. Yours, A. WALTON."

That night, evading the loving girl, George Halstead stole from his home, never to return.

Days passed, yet he came not. At last the river cleared the terrible mystery. On its bank were cast the remains of the miserable man—the sad result of woman's vanity, extravagance and carelessness.

The verdict, "Accidental death by drowning, when in a fit of temporary insanity," was given by the jury, and accepted by the people. But I think another verdict might be found, which would more clearly explain this case, and many others: "Driven to death by woman's folly." Men sometimes are more considerate than wise.

It was a terrible blow to the gentle, loving Gertie. Not a thought she spent on the loss of all wordly possessions—all, and only for the dear father she grieved. But *her* sorrow was freed from the bitter pangs of conscience.

"FALLEN BY THE WAY."

BY LOUISE S. UPHAM.

And so you go West! Well, I wish you much joy;
God's blessing and mine both be with you, my boy!
You will need them, I'm thinking, for here at the East
The faces of loved ones give zest to each feast.
Love blesses all here, while *you* go to the land
Where you'll only be known to your small household band;
And when the sun smiles on your *new* home, it may
Be sunset with your father and mother who stay.

But I'm not the one to discourage you, lad,
Though I own something tugs at my heart-strings right bad;
And a troublesome lump in my throat bids me say
I am not in a mood for much talking to-day.
Still, if you can do better, why, up stakes and go.
"Nothing risked, nothing had." I have tried, and I know.
A few years at the most, and your mother and I
Together will rest in the church-yard close by.

It's a duty we owe to the dear ones, so frail,
To provide them a home ere the strong arm may fail.
I argued it once with your mother; she'll tell
How she pleaded and struggled against me. Well, well,
Perhaps it is all for the best; for we live
Most and best when *most* to our Maker we give.
But I'd give all I have, and throw the world in,
For the babes that I lost in my struggle to win.

When *we* began life, our whole stock in trade
Was our love for each other and the little I'd made
In the year I had worked for myself. That, for two,
Seemed a pretty good start; we were sure it would do.
But the family came—a girl and three boys—
Who doubled our cares, though they trippled our joys;
And I sighed for a home and a haven of rest
On the beautiful prairies I'd heard of out West.

We did not sell out, for we'd nothing to sell;
But wife packed our few trinkets, bedewing them well
With her tears, as she stopped from her work, now and then,
To pat the dear boys and kiss baby again;
For the dainty white things that she placed in the chest
Looked like burial robes for the babe at her breast;
And the marbles and tops and the gay-colored ball
Fell with thuds like the sods on a funeral pall!

I laughed at her fears 'till I won her to smiles;
Then, the angel she is, those long, weary miles
Stretched away, till we counted by scores the gay towns
We had passed, and I couldn't tell her crosses from crowns!
Her strength never failed, and her love never waned;
If she yearned for old home ties and scenes, she remained
So helpful, so hopeful, so cheerful, I'd give
A kingdom, if mine, my life over to live!

Ah! didn't she merit a crown for such zeal?
She got it, but set with a martyr's red seal!
Our baby drooped first, and we dug a wee grave
Where the tall prairie grass o'er her low bed will wave.
Then two dear boys followed; the hot sun killed one,
The fever another, ere that short week was done!
We set up rude head-boards, to trav'lers to say,
"Mary, Johnny and Robbie, who fell by the way."

I'd no heart then for riches: I'd lost all but you,
And I feared, in my anguish, I should bury you too,
So I turned my face homeward; and the sun shines to-day
On a man growing old in the old, beaten way.
Go West, if you must, boy; I'll pray you may gain
The wealth and the honor I strove for in vain.
Your mother and I have not long here to stay—
Like our babes that we lost, we'll soon "fall by the way."

* * *

A DARING GAME;

OR,

Neva's Three Lovers.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK AT LAST.

The conclusion of the low and cautious knocking upon the office door of Mr. Atkins was lost in a wild burst of the gale which tore along the streets, shrieking and moaning like some maddened demon. Sir Harold Wynde and Mr. Atkins looked at each other, and then both glanced at the clock. It was upon the stroke of twelve.

"A late hour for a call," said the Baronet uneasily. "I have no wish to be seen, Atkins. I am in no mood to encounter a possible client of yours."

The knock sounded again, in a lull of the storm, low, secret and imperative.

Atkins' face brightened up with sudden relief and joy.

"I know that knock," he said. "Please step into the inner office, Sir Harold. You shall see no one but friends to-night."

He opened the door of the small, dark, inner office, and Sir Harold passed in and stood in the darkness, leaving the door slightly ajar.

Atkins hastened to open the outer door. A gust of wind swept fiercely in, and with it, and as if impelled by it, a man hurried into the office, and closed the door with both his hands.

He was slender, but so muffled in coat collar and cap that no one could have guessed his identity.

"Lord Towyn?" said Atkins doubtfully.

The new-comer took off his cap and turned down his collar. The lawyer's instinct had not deceived him. The noble face, the bright blue eyes, so full of warmth and glow, the tawny mustache, and the golden hair above a grand forehead—all these, now displayed to the solicitor's gaze, were the features of Neva's favored lover. But the young Earl looked pale and worn by anxieties, and although now there was a glow and brightness and eagerness in his face and manner, yet one could see in all his features the traces of great and recent suffering.

"Alone, Atkins?" he exclaimed, extending his hand, while he swept a quick glance about the room. "I am glad to have found you up, but had you gone to sleep, I must have awakened you. I have just received important news by messenger, who routed me up at my hotel. I came to you as soon as I could—"

"If the news is unpleasant, do not tell it just yet," said Atkins nervously, with a glance at the inner room. "I have news too, Lord Towyn. Come to the fire. Bless us, how the wind howls!"

The young Earl removed his greatcoat and advanced to the fire, and Atkins went into the inner office. The sound of whispering followed. Lord Towyn heard the sound and started, and at the same moment his glance fell upon Sir Harold Wynde's cast-off greatcoat and hat. Presently Atkins returned, rubbing his hands together with excitement.

"You are not alone, I see," said the young Earl. "I will see you again, Atkins—"

"Stay, my lord," said the solicitor. "I have news, great news, to impart to you. Let me communicate mine first. Can you bear a great surprise—a shock?"

"You have heard from Miss Wynde?" cried Lord Towyn. "You have later news even than mine? Speak, Atkins. Those villains have not succeeded in forcing her into a marriage with young Black? It is not that—say that it is not."

"It is not that, my lord. How am I to tell you the startling news I have just learned? My lord, I have had a visit to-night from a gentleman who has just returned from India. He knew Sir Harold Wynde well, and came to give me all the particulars of Sir Harold's supposed death!"

"*Supposed* death? How strangely you choose your words, Atkins. *Supposed* death?"

"Yes, my lord," cried Atkins, trembling and eager. "We have all mourned Sir Harold as dead. And this gentleman says—prepare for a suprise, my lord—he says that Sir Harold Wynde still lives!"

The young Earl started, and grew white.

"It is impossible!" he ejaculated. "He lives? It is preposterous! Atkins, you are the sport of some impostor!"

"No, no, my lord. I believe it; I believe that Sir Harold lives!"

"Have you forgotten the letter of Surgeon Graham, giving a circumstantial and minute account of Sir Harold's death?" demanded Lord Towyn. "If Sir Harold had survived his encounter with the tiger, would he not have returned home over a year ago?"

"The—the gentleman who gave me the particulars of Sir Harold's fate," said Atkins, full of suppressed excitement, "says that the Baronet was unfortunate enough to incur the enmity of his Hindoo servant, who secretly swore revenge. Sir Harold actually encountered the tiger, as was said, but a shot from the servant frightened the beast, and he fled back into the jungle. Sir Harold was wounded and bleeding, and his horse was killed. The Hindoo servant picked up his disabled master, and, instead of taking him back to Major Archer's bungalow, he carried him forward and gave him into the hands of some of his own friends and country people, and these friends of the Hindoo carried off Sir Harold further into the hill country, to their home, a sort of mountain fastness. They kept him there closely imprisoned, and while we mourned our friend as dead, he was chained in a cell but little better than a dungeon."

Lord Towyn still looked incredulous.

"How did the bearer of this strange tale discover these strange facts, if facts they are?" he demanded. "I should like to see this gentleman from India? I should like to question him—"

He paused, as the door of the inner room opened, and Sir Harold Wynde, pale and haggard, came into the outer office.

Lord Towyn uttered a strange cry, and sprang backward, his face whitening to deathliness.

Sir Harold approached the young man, extending his hand.

"Behold 'the gentleman from India,'" he said, faintly smiling. "My dear boy, ask me as many questions as you like. Don't you know me, Arthur, that you stare at me so? I am no ghost, although our friend Atkins took me for one."

Another cry, but this time a cry of rapture, broke from the young Earl's lips. He bounded forward and clasped Sir Harold's hands in his, and both were silent with an emotion too mighty for speech.

Atkins turned aside to add fresh fuel to the blazing fire, his own features working.

"Sir Harold! O, Sir Harold!" cried Lord Towyn at last, in a very ecstasy of gladness. "What a joy this will be to my poor little Neva! She has mourned for you as dead, and I have thought that the shadow of your supposed fate would darken all her life. How glad she will be, my poor little girl!"

"Your little girl?" said Sir Harold.

Lord Towyn's fair face flushed.

"I love Neva, and she loves me," he said frankly. "She has promised to marry me, and I hope, Sir Harold, that you retain your former good opinion of me, and will sanction our union."

"We will see," said the Baronet, pressing the young Earl's hand warmly. "It has always been my desire, as it was that of your father, to unite my family to yours. Your face tells me that you have fulfilled the glorious promise of your boyhood. If Neva consents to marry you, my dear Arthur, I shall not refuse my consent."

Lord Towyn looked his delight, and then cast a quick, inquiring glance at Atkins.

"Does Sir Harold know?" he asked significantly.

"I have told him," answered the solicitor, "that Miss Wynde has disappeared in the most mysterious manner, and that she is in the power of a couple of adventurers—"

Sir Harold interrupted Atkins by a passionate gesture.

"Arthur," exclaimed the Baronet, his proud face drawn with pain, "Atkins tells me that I have been deceived in—in Lady Wynde, and that he has discovered her to be an adventuress, unscrupulous and unprincipled. Is this his prejudice? I cannot give utter credence to it."

"It is God's truth, Sir Harold," said Lord Towyn solemnly, holding the Baronet's hand in a strong, firm pressure. "It is better that you should know the truth from us than to hear it from strangers, or be further deceived by the woman you made your wife. Lady Wynde is an adventuress, bold and false and wicked."

"You forget that I knew her history even back to her childhood," cried Sir Harold eagerly. "I did not marry her with my eyes blindfolded. She never attempted to impose herself upon me as other than she was. She made known her whole life to me. She was the daughter of a naval officer, and the niece of Mrs. Hyde, a lady of good family and position, who lives a very retired life in Bloomsbury Square, London. We ate our wedding breakfast in Mrs. Hyde's house. Lady Wynde's first husband was the Honorable Charles Hathaway, the younger son of a Viscount. Lady Wynde's family connections both by birth and marriage are excellent. I knew all this beyond a peradventure before I married her. And yet you call her an adventuress!"

"And so she was, Sir Harold," exclaimed Atkins. "Her past life, her family and her connections were all you say. Her record was all fair. Not a word had ever been whispered against her reputation, and she went in the best society, and had admirers and suitors. All this I grant. But she was none the less an adventuress at heart. She had an income of three hundred pounds a year and spent a thousand, sponged from relatives, or given her by Craven Black, from his winnings at the gaming table or at the races. She was engaged to marry Craven Black soon after Mr. Hathaway's death, and before her marriage with you. Mrs. Hyde is not overfond of her niece, and told me this fact herself. This marriage, owing to the meagre fixed income of the pair, was deferred, and finally they conceived the idea that Mrs. Hathaway should contract a wealthy marriage, secure a comfortable jointure, become a widow, and then marry Craven Black. There can be no doubt that your marriage with Mrs. Hathaway was the result of a conspiracy against you by these two villains, male and female—that they had set a trap for you, Sir Harold, and that you fell into it!"

Sir Harold turned his haggard eyes upon Lord Towyn.

"It is true," said the young Earl, full of the tenderest sympathy. "You were imposed upon, Sir Harold. The woman you married, so fair and spotless in seeming, was like some fair fruit with a worm at its core. There are adventuresses in good society, of good birth and spotless reputations, as there are well-born adventurers. Mr. Atkins is right. Craven Black and Mrs. Hathaway have played a daring game, but they have not yet won. This is a terrible stroke to you, dear Sir Harold; but bear it bravely. You are not desolate because Lady Wynde feigned a love for you, and has proved false and wicked. You have the holy memories of your first wife to keep pure and steadfast your faith in woman. You have Neva to love you. You have your friends."

But Sir Harold threw up his arms with a gesture of despair.

"I loved *her*!" he said brokenly. "I have thought of her in my Indian dungeon, and on the lonely sea, and have planned how to break to her the news of my return tenderly and gently, that her reason might be spared a shock which I feared might destroy it. And, O God! all the while she never loved me! While I thought of her upon the deck, with longings for wings, that I might sooner reach her, she was the wife of another, and exulted in the thought that she was rid of me forever! Ah, this is a dreary coming home!"

"It is, Sir Harold," said Lord Towyn sorrowfully; "but the wickedness of one person whom you have loved need not darken your life, nor paralyze your energies. Neva is in peril. Rouse yourself from this great grief for her sake. Think what joy your return will be to her. We must find her, and save her."

The young Earl had touched the right chord. Sir Harold aroused himself from his despair, and said:

"Yes; we must find her, and save her. But where are we to look for her? If the detectives have failed to find a clue to her whereabouts, how are we to succeed?"

"I have been upon the Continent," said Lord Towyn, "and have travelled from one end of England to the other. I have been upon a score of false trails, and failed to find a trace of those I sought. I have now been three or four days in this town, consulting every day with Atkins or Sir John Freise, while the detectives continued the search. And to-night I have received news which for the first time gives me hope that we are nearing the end. A messenger, sent by one of my detectives, came to me by the last down train from London, with a report of discoveries."

"They have been found?" cried Sir Harold eagerly.

"Not yet. The object of Craven Black and his wife—I hardly know how to call her, Sir Harold—was to marry Neva to Black's son, and so obtain control over the Hawkhurst property," said Lord Towyn. "It is to effect this marriage that Craven Black and his wife are engaged in persecuting Neva. When they left Hawkhurst, they left Rufus Black behind them. It occurred to me that when they should deem matters in a fair state of progress, or when Neva showed signs of relenting, they would send for Rufus to come and plead his cause, or to marry her, wherever they might be. I therefore hired a detective to watch Rufus, and it is from this detective, and not from those in search of Neva, that I have to-night heard."

"And what does he say?" demanded Atkins breathlessly.

"Young Black has remained at Hawkhurst ever since the marriage—some five weeks. Two or three days ago he went up to London. The detective, who has been stopping at Wyndham as a commercial traveller in broken health, went up on the same train. It seemed at first, my messenger says, as if young Black had had no object beyond a day's saunter in town. He visited picture shops and so on, but that night he went to the Great Northern railway station, and found the train gone. That movement of his, as the detective said, began to look like business. Black went to his hotel, the detective still on his track. The next morning young Black sold his watch and chain, and the next evening he was off again to the Great Northern railway station. He caught the night express, and went on it, the detective on the same train. The detective sent a note from Edinburgh to a fellow-officer, who brought it to me to-night. I am convinced that Rufus Black has gone to rejoin his father, and that if we follow him, we shall find Neva."

"To what place did he book himself?" asked Atkins.

"To Inverness. It is plain that while the Blacks tried to persuade us that they were upon the Continent, they were safely hidden with Neva in the Scottish Highlands. They may have gone there from some idea of bringing about an informal Scottish marriage between Neva and young Black. Neva can know nothing of the marriage laws of Scotland, where a declaration from a woman that a certain man is her husband, when he hears and does not contradict the assertion, and vice versa, constitutes a legal and binding marriage. The Blacks may calculate upon Neva's ignorance, and hope to avail themselves of the facilities of Scottish law in marrying her to Rufus."

"It is very probable," said Atkins, knitting his brows.

"Young Black has the start of us. He must have arrived at Inverness to-day. I came here to propose, Atkins, that we start for the north by the earliest morning train. We are on the right track now," said Lord Towyn. "Let us follow it up promptly."

"We will go in the morning," declared Atkins.

"I shall go also," said Sir Harold. "Let the secret of my return be kept a secret still. I do not wish to warn this Craven Black, or put him on his guard. Call me Mr. Hunlow. It is the name I travelled home under. And be careful not to betray my secret until I myself declare it."

The three sat together by the office fire all the remainder of the night and talked. In the morning Atkins wrote a note to his wife, and another to his clerks, and leaving the notes upon his desk, went out with his two guests before the family were astir. Sir Harold muffled his face beyond recognition, and conducted Lord Towyn and Atkins to his hotel. Here they were served with breakfast, and soon after they proceeded to the station, and took the train for London.

Sir Harold breathed more freely when they had left the Cathedral town behind them. He was well known in Canterbury, and with a strange, nervous shrinking, he dreaded recognition before he should choose to make his return known.

On arriving in London, the three pursuers hastened to the Great Northern Railway station, and an hour later they were on their way to Scotland, upon the trail of Rufus Black.

CHAPTER XLIV.

REUNITED.

Upon the day after the storm, a high wind still prevailed. No sailing vessel dared put out to sea from Inverness. The sky was dun and gray, with now and then a fitful gleam of sickly yellowish sunlight. The black waters were all alive with "white caps," and the sullen roar of the waves, as they hurled themselves against the cliffs upon whose summit stood the house of Heather Hills, filled all the house with its monotonous tumult.

Lally Bird spent the morning in her own room, upon a sofa in a recessed window. Mrs. Peters came and went softly, bestowing pitying glances upon the round gipsy face lying so white and sorrowful against the cushions, but the dusky eyes were looking seaward with a strange, far off, steadfast gaze, and it was evident that the young girl was not even conscious of the presence of her attendant.

At noon Mrs. Peters brought up a tray on which was spread a tempting luncheon of chocolate, hot rolls, delicate game birds, and jellies. She placed the tray upon a low table, and wheeled it beside the sofa. Still Lally did not stir.

"Miss Lally," cried the good woman, her lip quivering. "Are you not going to eat today? You had no breakfast. You will be ill. I know that I have offended you beyond all forgiveness, and that my face must be unpleasant in your sight, but I would undo what I have done if I could. Better almost any kind of a marriage than to see you lying here looking so wan and hopeless. Oh, Miss Lally, if you would only speak to me!"

Lally turned her face slowly, with a look of surprise mingling with her expression of pain.

"Why, Peters," she said kindly, "I did not know you were so troubled about me. I am not angry at you. You meant what you did for the best. There, don't cry, Peters. I am not angry; indeed, I am not. You are as much my friend as ever. Sit down by me, and we will eat our luncheon together."

Peters complied as soon as she could command her emotion, and Lally aroused herself to speak cheerfully, and to inquire concerning the results of the storm.

After the luncheon, the young mistress of Heather Hills announced her intention of going out for a solitary walk. The wind was not so high as it had been in the morning, and Mrs. Peters did not venture any objections. Lally attired herself in a bombazine walking dress and astrachan jacket, hat and muff, and about two o'clock she went out alone for a walk along the cliffs.

For an hour or more she rambled on, stopping now and then to rest, and keeping near the sea, over whose wide wild waters her gaze strayed and fixed itself with singular steadfastness. At last she sat down upon a great bowlder, and the slender black figure was ontlined against the gray sky with startling distinctness.

Before her lay the wild and restless sea, behind her the undulating fields of her new domain. At one side of her, in the gray distance, was the house of Heather Hills, and on the other hand, and nearer, was the low range of heath-clad hills which gave the estate its name.

It was a lonely spot, that upon which she had paused to rest, with a bold bluff surmounted by a very chaos of rocks, upon whose summit she had perched herself. A few sea-gulls were screaming in the air, but besides them and the wild birds on the heath there was no sign of life, far or near.

An hour passed. The wind still blew strong and fierce, tugging at her hat and garments with strong, despoiling hands. Her vail was swept over the bluff into the abyss of waters, and her hair was torn from its confining braids, and tumbled over her shoulders in a dusky cascade. But still Lally sat high up upon the rocky mass, paying no heed to wind or murmur of wave, her soul being busy with the great problem of her destiny.

And so, looking seaward with great longing eyes, she did not see a human figure coming toward her over the fields. It came nearer and nearer—the figure of Rufus Black!

The young man had gone back to Inverness upon the previous night, but he had not been content to accept his dismissal at the hands of Mrs. Peters. His old love for Lally was strong and fierce, and he was determined to win back his lost young wife, if energy and patience and love and sincere repentance could win her back. So, after a sleepless night, and a morning spent in indecision and irresolution, he had come out again to Heather Hills. Mrs. Peters was in her own room, and the house-maid had answered his knock. Rufus had inquired for Miss Bird, but the house-maid had never heard the name. He then asked for Mrs. Black. That name was also unknown at Heather Hills. In this dilemma, believing Lally to be at the Hills, as a companion to Miss Wroat, and believing her to have taken a new name as a disguise, he boldly asked for Miss Wroat, determined to see Lally's supposed employer, and to entreat her to intercede in his behalf with Lally. The house-maid had told him that Miss Wroat had gone out for a walk, indicating the direction, and calling up all his courage, Rufus had started in pursuit.

He saw the dark and slender figure perched on the rocks while yet afar off. Something in its droop reminded him of Lally, and he came on at a swinging pace, his eager gaze never swerving from her; and as he came nearer and yet nearer, the conviction stole upon him that it was Lally herself at whom he looked.

"She must have come out with Miss Wroat," he thought. "Rich ladies never walk without an attendant. She has dropped behind, being tired. It is Lally! it is—it is!"

He came up swiftly, the damp soil deadening the sound of his footsteps. He gained the rocks, and began to climb them to Lally's side, but the girl did not stir, nor notice his approach.

A sudden sound at her side at last startled her. With a quick exclamation, she turned her head—and beheld him!

She did not speak, but her great black eyes grew larger, and her face grew suddenly so deathly white that he thought she must be fainting.

"Lally! O Lally!" he cried to her, in an anguished, broken voice. "Thank God! I have found you! Oh, my darling, my little wife, whom I have mourned as dead!"

He knelt down before her, in the shadow of a projecting rock, the tears streaming over his face, and his eyes regarding her in wild imploring. So a devotee might have knelt to his patron saint, feeling unworthy to approach her, but longing and praying with his whole soul for forgiveness and mercy.

Lally felt her soul melt within her.

"Oh, Rufus!" she gasped, in a choking whisper.

He put up his arms to infold her. She shrank back, not with loathing, but with a sudden dignity, a sort of majesty, that awed him.

"You must not touch me, Rufus," she commanded. "I am not your wife—"

"You are! You are! Before God, I declare that you are my wife—"

"Hush, Rufus! You wrote to me that I was not your wife. Don't you remember? You said that our marriage was 'null and void.'"

"I thought it was. My father told me so!" cried Rufus. "O Lally, I have been a poor, weak-souled wretch. I am not worthy of your love. I should have stood by you, instead of basely deserting you through my own personal cowardice. My father threatened to have me indicted for perjury, in swearing that we were of age at the time of our marriage, and I—I was afraid. You can never respect me, Lally, nor love me again, I know, but if you knew how I have suffered you would pity me."

"I have always pitied you," she murmured.

"I thought you dead. I saw your poor mutilated drowned body in my dreams. Day and night it haunted me. I was nearly beside myself. I thought I should go mad. My father's mind was set upon my marriage with a great Kentish heiress who loved another than me. I appealed to her to save me—to save me from my anguish, torture and remorse, produced by continual thoughts of you! I had no heart to give her. I was base and unmanly in offering her the dregs of the cup that had been filled for you; but oh, Lally, I was half mad and wholly despairing! I wanted the love of some good woman to interpose and save me from going to perdition."

"I heard your offer of marriage to her," said Lally. "And you are engaged to marry her?"

"No; she refused me. I am free, Lally, and I thank God for it. What should I have done if I had married her and then discovered that you still live? I love you and you alone in the whole world. I am of age, and my own master. I have thrown off the shackles my father has kept upon me. I mean to be brave and honest and true henceforward, so help me God! I mean to be a man, Lally, in the best and noblest sense of the word. It shall never be said again of me that I am 'unstable as water,' or that I am a coward. Lally, I offer you a second marriage, which no one can contest. Will you forgive me, and take me back?"

His words found echo in Lally's heart, but she did not speak. Her pallor gave place to a sudden rose stain, and she began to tremble.

"I came to-day to entreat Miss Wroat to intercede with you for me," said Rufus, becoming alarmed at her silence. "I have not a fine home to offer you, such as Miss Wroat gives you, but I will work for you, Lally. I will make myself a great painter for your sake. Those worthless daubs I painted at New Brompton belong to the past life. Henceforward I will paint better pictures, and show that there is something in me. We will have two cozy rooms somewhere in the London suburbs, and you shall have a sunny window for flowers, and I will work for you, and you shall never know want or misery again. I can do anything with and for you, Lally, but if left to stand by myself I shall surely fall. Lally, little wife, take me back!"

He crept up nearer to her and held out his arms.

She crept into them like a weary child.

She might justly have reproached him for his weakness and cowardice, and have taunted him with having courted the heiress of Hawkhurst, but she did neither. She nestled in his arms, and looked up at him with great tender eyes full of a sweet compassion and love, and offered him her lips to kiss!

And so they were reunited.

For a while they sat in silence, their hearts too full for words. Then Rufus Black reverently touched her black garments, and asked simply:

"Are these worn for me?"

Lally shook her head.

"For the lost love and vanished trust?" he asked. "Yes, I see. But, my wife, if you will love and trust me again, I will try to make your life all rose color. Poor little wife! How you have suffered! I know the whole story from Miss Wroat. When I called at the house yonder last evening and asked for you as Mrs. Peters, a tall bony woman who stood in the hall came forward and said she was Mrs. Peters. I was completely mystified, for I had decided in my own mind that you were known here as Mrs. Peters, but I now see how it is. The old lady knows your story and was angry at me, and called herself Mrs. Peters to throw me off your track. She told me all your adventures since we parted. And now, little wife, let us seek your employer and tell her that you have taken me back, and that we are to be married to-morrow morning at Inverness."

"So soon, Rufus?"

"Yes. I mean to make you mine in a new bond that no one can contest. I have never taken steps to have our first marriage set aside, and I think it still stands. But we will be married quietly to-morrow morning in a Presbyterian church, and we can be so married without a license or publication of bans. May I take you to church to-morrow, little wife?"

"Yes," said Lally softly. "Oh, Rufus, I do think you are going to be strong and brave and true henceforward, and if so I shall not regret what I have suffered. It has been very bitter," and she shuddered; "but God is good to us at the last. I will try and be a good wife, and to strengthen and uphold you."

"You were always a good wife to me," sobbed Rufus, with a sudden remembrance of her gentleness, her tenderness, her strong faith in him, and her resolute faith that he would some day achieve honors and wealth. "Oh, Lally, I am not worthy to touch the hem of your garments, but for your sake I will be a man."

Lally stroked his cheek softly, as she had been wont to do in the long-ago, at the dingy lodgings at New Brompton.

"My poor boy!" she whispered yearningly. "My poor dear boy!"

"Shall we go now in search of Miss Wroat?" asked Rufus, drying his eyes. "I do not see her on the shore. I own I am afraid to meet her, Lally. It's a remnant of the old cowardice, you see. But last night, when she told me your pitiful story, I quailed before her. She must despise me, and she will surely try to persuade you to cast me off."

"My poor Rufus!" said Lally, with a gay, sweet smile, such as had not visited her roguish mouth since the blight had fallen on her life. "Mrs. Peters is harsh in seeming, but her heart is true and tender. She loves me dearly, and I love her more as a friend than as a mistress. One thing we must understand, Rufus," and Lally's gayety increased, "I can't part with dear old Peters."

Rufus looked aghast.

"You—you won't marry me then?" he gasped.

"Yes, Rufus; but I must keep Peters. She won't leave me; and besides, it was only yesterday I thought her the only friend I had in the world."

"Her name is Peters then?" said Rufus, bewildered. "I traced you two up from London under the names of Miss Wroat and Mrs. Peters. I didn't notice a third name as belonging to the party. By what name are you known here then, Lally?"

"As Miss Wroat, dear."

Rufus looked his amazement.

"I—I don't understand," he said helplessly. "They said that Miss Wroat was an eccentric old lady, who was rich, and odd as Dick's hatband. Has she adopted you?"

"Do you remember, Rufus, that last morning we spent together at New Brompton?" said Lally gravely. "I told you then that I had no relative living except a great-aunt, an old lady who lived in London, and who was rich, but whose name I did not know. That aunt I afterward discovered. Her name was Mrs. Wroat. She was an eccentric old lady, but good and sweet at heart, and I loved her. She is dead, and it is for her I wear mourning."

Rufus looked open-eyed astonishment.

"That is not all," said Lally. "I took my aunt's name at her death, at her request. She made me her heiress. I am the owner of the town house in Mount street, and of the estate of Heather Hills, and have besides fifty thousand pounds safely invested, so that I have an income of about three thousand pounds a year."

Rufus' arms dropped from his wife's waist.

"An heiress!" he muttered. "And I have dared to dream that you would take me back? An heiress! A trifle of money will set you free, Lally, from any marriage claims, and you can marry according to your new position. I do not wonder that Mrs. Peters turned me out of your house, a poor, good-for-nothing coward, unfit even to address you. An heiress! O Heaven! The word is like a two-edged sword between us!"

He moved backward, white and trembling.

A mischievous gleam shot from Lally's gipsy eyes.

"I have known so much of poverty," she said, "that I should like to keep this wealth. It would make a good basis to build upon. But if it is 'like a two-edged sword between us,' I suppose I can endow some already rich hospital with it, or give it to Peters, or send it to the heathen."

"You don't mean, Lally," cried Rufus, all agitation, "that you, a rich lady, will stoop from your high estate and marry me, and try to make something of me?"

"I do mean just that!" cried Lally, with spirit. "For you know, Rufus, I—I love you!"

Rufus was at her side again in an instant.

The hour wore on, and the early dusk of the gathering evening fell around the reunited lovers. Lally started at last, crying out:

"How dark it grows! It must be five o'clock, and Mrs. Peters will be distracted about me. I don't know as it is just etiquette, Rufus, but the circumstances are peculiar, and I don't believe that Mrs. Grundy has laid down any rule to fit the precise case, and the situation is so remote, and I don't believe anybody will know or care; and so—and so I'll invite you to remain to dine with me. But at an early hour—by ten o'clock, mind!—you must start for Inverness."

"And you will meet me there at eleven o'clock in the morning, at the kirk, little wife?"

"Yes," said Lally solemnly, and with a holy joy in her black eyes, "I will be there! Who shall part us now, Rufus?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* * *

MINUS CHARACTERS.

Quite an audible smile, at the expense of Spiggles and Lady, was created at Belville Hall not many evenings since. The occasion was a Fancy Dress Ball given by the Crœsus Club. It was understood that the members of the party were to dress in character, and a herald, or usher, was stationed at the door of the main saloon to announce to the company within the different characters as they entered.

Young Spiggles, being the son of a millionaire, and a golden light of the Crœsus, enjoyed the freedom of the club saloons, and having been able to find no masquerade dress quite up to his fancy, he had concluded to appear in his usual attire; and likewise his Aramanthea Sophia, daughter of old Barnacle Bullion, hung upon his arm in her ordinary evening dress of chignon, diamonds and lace.

"What characters shall I announce?" asked the usher, as Spiggles approached.

"We don't trouble ourselves with characters to-night," said the new-comer.

Spiggles and Miss Bullion entered, and their advent was announced, in stentorian tones, by the usher:

"A young gentleman and lady *without any characters!*"

C.

A MAY MELODY.

BY JOEL BENTON.

The earth sails under the arch of May,
Gay with garlands, and troops attend her;
The blue sky melts, and day by day
We walk in visions and dreams of splendor.

The dandelion's disk on the tender green
Dots with its gold the verdurous spaces;
On knoll and meadow its glimmer and sheen
Fill with glory the desolate places.

The robin is turned to an architect,
Weaving brown twigs in a leafy cover;
While the phebe's piteous wail, I suspect,
Is wrung from her heart by some treacherous lover.

On the river's bank, with a hint of snow,
The sanguinaria's petals are drifted;
But the frail anemone you shall know
By the tenderest touch of the wind uplifted.

The humble-bee tries how closely clear
He can graze your head, on his whizzing pinions,
And beats his boom on the atmosphere,
As he sails for the Sybarite's sweet dominions.

Now darts up the bobolink: watch and see
This acrobat's skill; note his musical flavor—
His trilled and tremoloed melody
Of minim and crotchet and semiquaver.

In the pink-white orchard's pomp and bloom
The bees are droning their drowsy chorus;
New birds are coming—make room, make room,
For the opulent Summer is just before us!

* * *

THE DUSENBURY PROPERTY.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

"There's the telegram office boy. What can he want?" said Mrs. Dusenbury, going to the door as she spoke. "I'm sure I don't know who'd telegraph to us. It must be some mistake."

"Mrs. Margaret Dusenbury," said the boy, as though in contradiction of the assertion. "Seventy-five cents, if you please."

Mrs. Dusenbury signed the receipt and paid the money, and the boy departed in the peculiarly slow and unconcerned manner of all messengers attached to telegraph offices, who, instead of being possessed with a sense of great emergency, and a life and death responsibility, as one might suppose they would be, are always the slowest and most dilatory of beings, and may be known as far as one can see them by their snail-like gait, and a habit of stopping altogether at short intervals to stare at vacancy.

"It's your Uncle Penfeather, Silas," said Mrs. Dusenbury, after a perusal of the short dispatch. "He wants me to come at once, and promises to pay expenses. What can it mean?"

"I don't know," said Silas. "Perhaps he's sick."

"I suppose I must go," said Mrs. Dusenbury; "but there's Mrs. Finnegan's silk dress; and there's Miss Roberts' polonaise. It will ruin my business."

And Mrs. Dusenbury, who had taken to dress-making after her husband's death, shook her head in a melancholy manner.

"Have Hannah Petrel in to finish 'em up," said Silas. "Uncle Penfeather is rich, and who knows what may come of it?"

Mrs. Dusenbury shook her head again, but she sent for Hannah Petrel, and packed her little trunk that very night. She had had large trunks full of clothes once in her life, before she married Peleg Dusenbury, who was only a clerk in a retail store, and so offended her Uncle Penfeather, the rich attorney, who did a little money lending on good security in a very private way, and was of the opinion that poverty was a crime.

A little faded woman of forty she was now, and it had taken all that she could earn to live, thus far; and Silas, who was just sixteen, had been esteemed fortunate in procuring one of those lucrative situations which are open to youths of his age, who are offered two dollars a week for the services of a good accountant, combined with that of errand boy and odd man, with a future prospect of prompt dismissal as soon as they request higher wages.

"How angry Uncle Penfeather was when I saw him last," she said to herself. "Dear, dear! and how pink my cheeks were, and how plump I was. I'm sure he won't know me."

And with these thoughts she found herself at the depot of the city in which her uncle still made his residence, and was soon after set down in a cab at the well-known door, which she had left in tears, and followed by bitter reproaches, some twenty years before.

An old woman opened the door.

"Mrs. Dusenbury, I suppose?" she said. "I'm the housekeeper, Mrs. Crash. I don't know as you know how bad poor Mr. Penfeather is. Quite sinking, as one may say. He had a bad accident: fell down stairs and injured his spine; and he'll never be about again, I fancy."

"Poor uncle," said Mrs. Dusenbury, bursting into tears. "I'll go up at once."

"Yes 'm," said Mrs. Crash. "He expects you. First floor, front. I'll see to your trunk."

And Mrs. Dusenbury ran up stairs.

Mr. Penfeather was in bed, and he checked Mrs. Dusenbury's affectionate greeting with a cold "How de do?"

"I suppose you find me greatly altered, Uncle Pen.?" said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"Expected to," said Uncle Penfeather. "Wine improves with age. Women don't."

"Ah, no," said Mrs. Dusenbury. "And you're very ill, they tell me."

"Who tells you?" asked Uncle Penfeather.

"The lady that opened the door," said his niece meekly.

"My abominable old housekeeper, eh?" asked the sick man.

"Well, she said she was housekeeper," said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"Shut the door," said Mr. Penfeather.

Mrs. Dusenbury did so.

"Lived with me fifteen years, that old woman has," said the uncle; "paid her twenty dollars a month; parlor to herself; young woman to help with the work; recommended by the Widows' Benevolent Association; certificates from clergymen; husband killed ringing a big church bell for morning service; tumbled down the bell tower; son janitor of a church; pious connection all around; carried a book of poetry you left about out of doors with the tongs; dismissed the milkman because his brother was a stage carpenter, connected with the theatre, you know; said she thought as much of me as if I was her son. What do you suppose that woman has been doing for these fifteen years?"

"I can't think," said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"Well, nobody could," said Uncle Penfeather. "She's been robbing me, Margaret. Butcher bill ten dollars—she calls it fifteen, and pockets five; ton of coal charged at half as much again; barrel of sugar sent to her daughter-in-law; piece of linen made up—half the sheets for me, half for her son. How was I to know? Household arrangements, and all that sort of thing. I've been regularly plundered, and I've got proof of everything."

"Scandalous!" said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"I should think so," said Mr. Penfeather, "and I thought I'd bound her to me. I made my will ten years ago, Margaret, and I left her this house and twenty thousand dollars; the rest to go to the Widows. She saw it, and she promised to keep house for me as long as I lived. Splendid housekeeper she is, too. And after that she began to rob me."

"O dear!" said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"But I've come up with her," said Mr. Penfeather. "That will is at Lawyer Barclay's. She knows it, and thinks she's safe; but I've made another. I'm able to do it myself, you know, and I had a couple of men in for witnesses, and she knows nothing about it. I've got it in bed with me, and what I want you to do is to hide it for me. The twenty thousand is for you; the rest for the Bachelors' Aid Society. They hate the Widows."

"Oh, uncle," said Mrs. Dusenbury. "You're very kind: but I hope you'll get well."

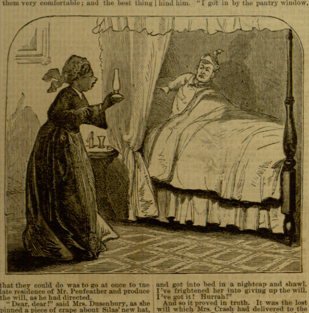
"I'm not kind," said Uncle Penfeather, "and I can't get well, though I may live a year or two. You know the secret drawer in the bookcase yonder. Nobody else does. She don't. Put it in there. See that the spring is firm. And when I'm dead, after she's begun to hold out her claw for the money, produce that. I sha'n't say a word. Make her work like a Trojan. Threaten to alter my will if she don't do anything I ask. And I'll enjoy the joke, I can tell you. Hope I shall live three or four years—he, he!"

"Uncle, I should be glad to nurse you," said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"That would spoil my plan," said Uncle Penfeather. "You may go home to-morrow. You ought not to have accepted Peleg; never could make his living; wasteful, idle—never would put by money. No matter. Stay all night. Make her feed you up well. Put her to trouble. And don't forget the secret drawer. Tell your son, in case you should die first. There—I've talked enough. Go and get your tea!"

And Mrs. Dusenbury had her tea, and departed from her uncle's house next morning. She never saw him again. However, he did not die at once. He lived two years, and during all that time he never left his bed, and Mrs. Crash was his sole nurse and housekeeper.

When the news of his death came, Mrs. Dusenbury sat down and had "a good cry," as in duty bound; but by and by a remembrance of the will began to cheer her. Twenty thousand dollars was a large sum; it would make them very comfortable; and the best thing that they could do was to go at once to the late residence of Mr. Penfeather and produce the will, as he had directed.



"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Dusenbury, as she pinned a piece of crape about Silas' new hat, "what a world this is, to be sure! And what a man you are growing! and so like your poor Uncle Penfeather; just his build exactly, his eyes. When your hair grows white you'll be his image."

So mother and son in their simple mourning attended the funeral, and afterward held a consultation with Lawyer Barclay, who had come in to read the will.

"Another will, is there?" said Mr. Barclay. "Well, that's just like the old gentleman. Secret drawer—ah ha! Very well, open it, ma'am."

And Mrs. Dusenbury, followed by her son and the lawyer, proceeded to the bookcase. There she stopped, horror-stricken. The secret drawer *was* open. It stood well out from the groove in which it fitted when closed, and there was a great crack in the wood beneath, as though it had been opened by force.

Mrs. Crash was called. She said, "Indeed!" when the crack was pointed out to her. "She knew nothing about her poor master's intentions. The bookcase was old. She thought it must have warped. It was not her affair."

And in fact no will was found other than the one in Mr. Barclay's possession. This eventually being read, the "Widows" and Mrs. Crash were the fortunate dividers of old Mr. Penfeather's property.

"I know that woman has stolen the will," said Mrs. Dusenbury, "but we can't prove it, and after all we must go home as poor as we came."

"I suppose so," said Silas. "Ma, didn't you say I looked like your Uncle Penfeather?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dusenbury.

"And his hair was white?" asked Silas.

"As white as snow," said Mrs. Dusenbury. "O dear! I should think he couldn't rest easy if he knew of this. She's stolen the will for certain."

"Yes," said Silas, "I think she has."

It was night. Mrs. Crash sat in her old room. The house now belonged to her, and she was mistress there, but she sat in the housekeeper's room from habit. She had just made herself some tea, and was putting the pot on the table, when a sudden jingle of the bell over her head startled her. It was the bell that Mr. Penfeather used to ring when he wanted her in his room.

"Dead and gone so long," said Mrs. Crash, "and the last pull he gave that bell has just jerked itself back again, I suppose. Ah! you old gentleman."

"Tinkle, tinkle," went the bell.

"Lord save us!" said Mrs. Crash.

"Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle."

The bell again. Mrs. Crash was all alone in the house, and she was growing nervous.

"I'll just look in and see what does make that bell go so," she said; and with a candle in her hand, took her way up stairs. Outside of her master's old room she paused. The bell was ringing again, and the room which should have been dark was light.

"Drat it! what does it mean?" said Mrs. Crash, and threw the door wide open.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Crash," cried a voice from the bed. "I've been waiting for my tea and my medicine for two good hours."

There in bed lay Mr. Penfeather. The same white nightcap on his head, the same checked kerchief about his throat.

Mrs. Crash felt her knees trembling under her. She could not run away; she could scarcely stand. She supported herself by the lock of the door, and gasped, and stared at the bed.

"What's the matter?" asked the voice from the bed; "I suppose you thought you'd got rid of me?"

It was so like the living Mr. Penfeather's tone, that Mrs. Crash felt it necessary to reply.

"Well, we did think as you was dead, sir," she gasped. "We—took—the—liberty of imagining as how you was buried, sir."

"So I am," said that which looked like Mr. Penfeather.

Mrs. Crash gave a little scream.

"Yes, I'm dead," said the being in the bed; "but I can't rest until matters are all settled. My niece couldn't find the will in the bookcase. What did you do with it?"

"La, sir—" faltered Mrs. Crash. "O dear! Oh!"

"*You* took it," said Mr. Penfeather. "Spirits know everything. *You* stole it, as you did the sugar."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Crash.

"If you have destroyed it," said Mr. Penfeather, "woe betide you. I'll haunt you every day of your life."

"I—haven't—" gasped Mrs. Crash. "I—was afeared. I buried it in the back garden, under the grape-vine."

"Dig it up then," said Mr. Penfeather. "Dig it up, Rebecca Crash, and bring it to me—*or I'll haunt you* for ever."

"Oh, please, sir," said Mrs. Crash.

"Go then," said the spirit.

Mrs. Crash went. She tottered down stairs and went out into the garden. She took a shovel and plied it at the foot of the grape-vine, and unearthed a grimy piece of parchment, spurred on by the ringing of that ghostly bell the while; and at last she climbed the stairs again, and stood trembling at the door of the haunted chamber.

"You have the will, Rebecca Crash?" asked the ghost of Mr. Penfeather.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Crash faintly.

"Give it to me. Put out the lights and go. I can now rest in peace," said Mr. Penfeather.

And Mrs. Crash, depositing the parchment on the foot of the bed, tumbled out of the room and down the stairs, at the foot of which she fell fainting.

About an hour after this, Mrs. Dusenbury heard a knock at the door of the room she still occupied, at a small hotel in the place.

"Who is that?" she cried, in a little alarm.

"It's I, mother," said the voice of Silas. "Hurrah!"

"What about?" asked Mrs. Dusenbury.

"I've been playing ghost at Uncle Penfeather's," said Silas, as he shut the door behind him. "I got in by the pantry window, and got into bed in a nightcap and shawl. I've frightened her into giving up the will. I've got it! Hurrah!"

And so it proved in truth. It was the lost will which Mrs. Crash had delivered to the ghost, and the Dusenburys came into their property.

* * *

SCIENCE.

Portions of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land, appear to be gradually rising from the sea. The water along the east coast of Australia is lessening in depth each year, and in the south and west recent sea-shells are found at considerable distances inland, and there are other and numerous evidences that a slow upheaval of the continent is taking place. In New Zealand, according to M. Elisée Reclus, the French geographer, the port of Lyttleton has risen three feet since the European settlement was established there. Hobart Town, the capital of Tasmania, is similarly situated; for Mr. Windle, in a paper on the geology of that place says, "Until a very recent period in the geological annals of this island, a great portion of what now constitutes the site of this city was under water."

The operation of puddling is the most laborious part of the process whereby cast-iron is converted into wrought iron. The commission of manufacturers from England, who lately visited this country to examine the puddling machine invented by an American iron-master, have reported so favorably that a number of English firms have contracted with the inventor to pay him two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for permission to build two hundred furnaces on his plan within six months, the money to be paid at the expiration of that time, whether the furnaces are then in operation or not. Until this invention was made, it was generally believed that a mechanical method equal to hand puddling could be devised.

The inference that the zodiacal light and the aurora borealis probably have the same origin has been drawn from two observations made by Professor Respighi—one on the zodiacal light as seen from the Red Sea last January, and one on the aurora subsequently—in which the spectroscope revealed the same lines. Mr. R. A. Proctor, however, thinks it probable that in the first instance it was not the spectrum of the zodiacal light that was observed at all, but the spectrum of an aurora which perhaps extended over the whole heavens.

M. Quetelet of Belgium has written a work on Anthropometry, or the measurement of the human body—from the Greek *anthropos*, man, and *metron*, a measure—which contains many curious propositions. He tells us, for example, that the ear remains at every age exactly equal in length to the sum of both the eyes; that the eye is constantly equal both to the space between the eyes and the width of the nose; and that the measurement of the head through the temples is equal to five times the breadth of the eye.

The Sumatran rhinoceros, according to Mr. P. L. Sclater, is the smallest of existing rhinoceroses. Although when named by Cuvier the species was believed to occur only in the island of Sumatra, it is found on the Malay Peninsula also. A full-grown specimen in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, London, is only four and a half feet high. There is one at Hamburg about a third smaller. It is noteworthy that no specimen of the well-known white rhinoceros of Africa has ever been brought to Europe or America.

The Rev. Robert Moffat, the famous African missionary, who is the father-in-law of Dr. Livingstone, confidently believes that the great explorer is still alive. Having himself been fifteen hundred miles into the interior of Africa, he knows the habits of the natives as well as any European living; and in his opinion Livingstone is detained by some chief who thinks him a great man, and hopes to be well paid when succor arrives from the coast.

The quantity of minute particles of dust floating in the air, according to a lecture recently delivered before the Royal Society of Dublin, depends on the amount of movement in the air; and where the air is very still, the particles subside, however small they may be. From the same source we learn of experiments showing that this dust is capable of penetrating the lining membrane of the lungs, and entering the cellular tissue.

Considerable regret is expressed by astronomers at the determination of the authorities of the Kew Observatory to discontinue the uninterrupted photographic record of the condition of the sun's disc, taken there during the past ten years, in which period no fewer than 2,778 photographs have been secured.

Professor Haldemann of Columbia, Pennsylvania, has sent the following question to the Mathematical Society of London: "The number of lines in a rhymed stanza being given, how many variations of rhyme-distribution does it admit of, suppose no line to be left without a rhyme?"

Professor Verrill of Yale College enumerates and describes about twenty-five species of American leeches in an article in *Silliman's Journal*. Very few of our common leeches ever suck blood. One species, named after the professor himself, inhabits both fresh and salt water.

The latest mail from Australia announces the discovery of a cake of gold weighing 3,764 ounces, and worth more than fifteen thousand pounds sterling.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. S. M. (Philadelphia) says: "I shall begin by telling you that I am second book-keeper in my uncle's store—wholesale grocery. My uncle is quite advanced in years, and I think is very fond of me, and looks forward to the time when I shall succeed him in the business. My parents are both deceased. My uncle is a bachelor, I am his only living relative. I get no salary, but all my bills are sent to him, and he also supplies me with spending money, which averages about one hundred dollars per month, and a greater part of this has found its way into the savings-bank from time to time. I have just passed my twenty-first birthday. I have been paying attentions to a young lady nearly two years, and took no pains whatever to conceal it from my uncle, though it seems he was unaware of it until lately, when he commanded me to discontinue my attentions, which I have not obeyed, at which he has become very much enraged. He has repeatedly asked me why I did not cultivate the acquaintance of Miss ——, a daughter of his late partner, and if I did that it would meet his entire approval; if not, he would have nothing more to do with me, and some charitable institution will receive all he leaves at his death. My uncle knew the young lady whom I love before I did, she being a daughter of a retail customer of his, and the reasons for his course in the matter, he says, are the difference in our social position, and the fact that she is my senior by four years. Now I want to know if you think his objections sound, and would you advise a friend of yours not to marry a lady whom he loved because she was four years older than himself, and when, by so doing, he would make an enemy of his uncle, and lose a magnificent inheritance, this friend not being dependent on his uncle or any one else for support, he being a good accountant, with many friends? Is twenty-two years considered too young for a man to marry?" This is an embarrassing question. As editor and prudent man of business, one is bound to caution you against a rash quarrel with that uncle; but as a man, with no special respect for wholesale as distinguished from retail, and in view of a nice good girl of six and twenty, if like you at two and twenty—well, we apprehend there would be a wedding. You had better, however, "hasten slowly." There may be some happy way of winning the bride, and not losing the uncle.

A Wife says: "You are strengthening and advising others; do give *me* a word of comfort. I have been married several years to an energetic young man whom I love dearly, and all I can say in regard to his affection for me is, that I have always *thought* I had his love. Do you wonder I now almost doubt it, when he seems to prefer the company of men who delight in lager beer and euchre, and who spend two or three nights each week away from their wives and homes, coming in between the hours of one and four in the morning? Am I different from other women, when I am constantly trying to imagine what my husband does during those hours of the night? Is it at all strange, loving him as I do, that I should lie awake night after night when he is out, thereby making myself old while I am still a young woman? If I ask kindly who his associates are, I am told that ''tis none of my business.' He tells me he is old enough to take care of himself, and yet he was out all of last night; and at breakfast, not having made his appearance, I was almost wild with anxiety, and sent a friend to hunt him up, who found him in a heavy sleep at the hotel. He sent me word that 'I ought to be a woman, and not worry over such little things.' Am I less a woman because I care whether my husband goes down to destruction? Is it 'none of my business,' when I left kind and indulgent parents to follow him to a strange country? Must I say nothing, but suffer disgrace with him? What can I do? Do give a moment of your valuable time to my case." All you can do is to be as good a wife, and make your home as attractive as possible, looking above for support and guidance. Such things as you speak of are bitter trials for an affectionate wife, and it is hard for her to bear them; but bear them she must, unless she can in some way overcome them by attractions superior to the allurements which lead the husband away. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

Exercise says: "I find that much is written for the benefit of invalids and debilitated persons, in relation to exercise—more particularly walking—as a promoter of health, and of the inhalation of air as an expander of the lungs; but very little, that I can find, is said about the *proper time* for them, or regarding morning air, morning walks before breakfast—of inhalation at that time, or of exercise or inhalation in the night air. The decided difference between the air of a bright cold day and that of sultry warm weather, and their effect upon the strength or weakness of the debilitated, and the proper way for invalids to take them respectively, is but lightly referred to. What do you think about morning air, walks in warm and cool weather, etc.? And what advice can you give, in your limited space, to the thousands of your readers who are constantly buying all kinds of books on health, and seeking knowledge in every other way, physicking and draining themselves to obtain the desideratum which hygienists and others so decidedly say can be had by exercise, inhalation, etc.? Of course, diet and many other things are taken into consideration. Such information as you may be able to give I have no doubt will be of benefit to the undersigned, as well as to many of your other readers." Among the conflicting opinions of authorities and the various forms of disease with which, with more or less intelligence, they deal, it is impossible to give an opinion that will cover many cases, and that will not be in opposition to some high authority. Too early walking is generally bad; miasma hovers around early in the day and in the evening. An intelligent person's own feelings ought to be a good guide. Walking that renders one languid or sick is to be avoided.

A Ledger Peruser says: "I have for a long while eagerly read your Notices to Correspondents, and thought I would like to make an encroachment on your time for a few moments. I am corresponding with a young lady in ——, New York, and have never seen her, the correspondence having been brought about by a friend of hers, as well as my own, giving me her name, and requesting me to write her, saying the lady wished to correspond with me, having seen some of my letters to her. I have held a correspondence with the unknown lady for some months, and have been invited to call on her during a proposed trip to New York this summer. Would it be proper for me to call, and how long ought I to stay? How ought I to conduct myself toward the lady's parents, familiarly after formal introduction, or be very reserved in their presence? Also what time of day should I call; and would it be proper for me to stay over night, if urgently invited?" We do not think very highly of the wisdom of your correspondent. You had better call in the forenoon; unless invited to stay, half an hour will be long enough for a visit. Do not take liberties with the parents because the child has been doing a doubtful thing; and judge for yourself according to conveniences, appearances, and the wish of the parents, as to staying over night.

Belle (Chicago) says: "I am a young girl of only fourteen years, and read with a great deal of interest your Notices to Correspondents, and never had any occasion to trouble you until the present. And what I wish to know is this: In introducing young boys of fourteen to sixteen years, should they be introduced by their surname or Christian name?" We presume you are in doubt as to whether to say "John Smith" or "Mr. John Smith," in the introduction. If you know them very well indeed, and are introducing them to very near friends, you may sometimes use their Christian names only, if you so address them yourself. If they are very conceited, and need to be "taken down" a little, you can do this. But in other circumstances it is better to describe them as "Mr. John Smith" or "Mr. Thomas Brown."

Eva (Beverly, O.) says: "As I have heard a great deal about the *Ledger*, and read some in it, I thought I would like to ask your advice about something that is of great importance to me. Would it be proper for me to write to a gentleman under an assumed name? I am a young girl of nineteen, and as I am without a good adviser, I thought I would write to you, as you always give such good advice." We advise you not to write to a gentleman under an assumed name. Such a proceeding is always suspicious, and a lady should be above suspicion. Between all persons, and particularly where one of the party is a lady, all should be open and truthful. The first Eve got into great trouble by deception. Do not practise, and do not admit it.

M. H. (Albany, N. Y.) says he "became engaged to a young lady; was then in business and doing well, but has since failed. He was forbidden her house, but a short time after met by appointment. She thought it better to break the engagement, as it was impossible for her to marry any one who had not money, but wishes to keep the ring because it is a handsome one, and wants to be friends; and wants him to write to her, but will not answer or see him, except as a casual caller, 'if he succeeds in business.' What is he to do? Hope on, or not?" He had better get the ring, and leave the lady.

A Constant Reader (Exchange Place, New York) says: "Would you be so kind as to inform me through your answers to correspondents whether there are any books published on physical culture and dieting, and where they are most likely to be had? By giving the above information, you will oblige." Huxley and Youman's Elements of Physiology and Hygiene, Combe's Principles of Physiology applied to Health and Education, and Dr. Flint's Physiology of Man, ought to supply your want.

V. E. (Paterson, N. J.) says: "I wish to become thoroughly informed in the general history and the rise and fall of political parties of this my native country. Will you please tell me what books I should read? Your large experience, and the confidence I repose in your judgment, have prompted me to seek advice from you in preference to others nearer home." There is nothing better than Bancroft's History of the United States. The school histories cannot enter into details sufficiently.

F. G. A. (Baltimore) says: "1st. I expect soon, say in a year, to go to college to study medicine. What book would you advise me to study preparatory to my going? 2d. Is it essential or necessary to be proficient in Latin? 3d. Can a student graduate and be as proficient in this country as in Europe? 4th. Would it not be better for a physician's practice for him to be married?" 1st. Carpenter's Physiology. 2d. It is desirable to know Latin. 3d. Yes. 4th. Yes, as a rule, if his wife is suitable.

Kittsville (N. C.) says: "Will you please inform me, through your paper, whether any of the descendants of the Stuart family of England are now living—Charles Edward, called the Pretender, being the last one that I see mentioned in history." There are many persons claiming connection with the Stuart family—some honestly, and some pretenders, no doubt. We do not know of any of them who are historically accredited.

Timothy S—— (Troy, N. Y.) says: "I am thirteen years of age, and I would like to ask a few questions. 1st. What class of books would you advise me to read, as I wish to be a lawyer? 2d. Name some author. By giving this your early attention, you will confer a great favor on me." 1. The best school-books in the Primary Schools in Troy, and then in College. 2. Blackstone's Commentaries.

Constant Reader (Stanton, Pa.) says: "Being an old and constant reader of your valuable paper, I wish to ask you a question of great importance, which I hope you will answer in your next issue, as we have left it to your decision. Do you think it would be right for a young lady engaged to be married to one person, to give her photograph to an old admirer to adorn his parlor? I think it is not proper, and she thinks there is not any harm in giving it to him, and would not want to hurt his feelings by asking him to return it: and she says I show a very jealous disposition by asking her to do so, and that we had better break the engagement, as we cannot agree on that account. She says she will not ask for the photograph, and I request her to do so. Am I not right in doing so? Please let me know what to do, as I do not wish to separate on such a small thing as that." Why should not a pure-minded woman value a man as a friend, though she does not love him as she would a husband? And why may not a male friend receive her portrait? Of course a discreet lady will consider all the circumstances, and be sure that the man is so true and manly that he can appreciate friendship where he was denied love. But if the lady is otherwise worthy of your love, you will be foolish to break an engagement on this account. You should have confidence in the judgment and pure feeling of a woman to whom you engaged yourself.

Charles Augustus (New York) says: "I desire your opinion on a matter, concerning which I never have read any inquiry or remark in your Notices to Correspondents. If a gentleman has arrived at the age of thirty-five years, and unmarried, from his impecunious condition or other circumstances, and is now possessed of sufficient means, and is desirous of entering into that relation, which of the two lines of conduct would it be best for him to pursue in obtaining a helpmeet: to make it a business to seek acquaintance, with the object of matrimony in view; or keep on in the 'even tenor of his way,' and mingle in society from motives of sociability merely, and wait for his 'other half' to come to him in the natural course of human events? As my condition may not be a solitary one, and seems to be one of some import, I trust you will not leave me unanswered." In Great Britain, where fences are of earth and shrub, not rails, birds' nests abound in them. One may see a boy on his way to school—that is his ostensible and direct duty—but with a keen side-long glance into the hedges for the nests—that is for his own personal aims. You have our permission to go into society, as a part of your social duty, and to *keep looking out* for what suits you.

J. A. S. (Norfolk) says: "Three years ago I met a young lady—I am now twenty-five years old—and made myself agreeable to her, as we were much in each other's society. I admired her for her gentle and pious demeanor, and for her strength of character, but she seems to lack that positiveness and vivacity I so much admire in a lady. Physically she is my opposite. I have always regarded her with the highest esteem, and though I am not positive that I love her as I should to marry her, I should feel extremely unwilling to hear of her marrying any one else. She has shown unmistakable evidence of love, or attachment, for me. Now that I have not seen her for six months, I am constantly thinking of her, and as I very much desire to be married, I always associate her with my ideal of a future companion. Now what I wish to know is, whether you think the feelings I entertain toward her are of a kind to justify a marriage with her." We acknowledge our inability to answer this question. No man can tell when another has eaten enough, or is warm enough. You are not fit to marry if you cannot tell when you love, and we recommend you to wait a little.

G. F. E. (Scotch Plains) writes: "I am a girl in my twenty-third year. I have a step-father, who is very severe. He will not let me go anywhere. He will not let me go to a neighbor's, or go in society at all, and if I ask him to let me go to church, he gets very angry. So I stay at home and say nothing, but keep thinking. My own dear mother says, 'Perhaps it is all for the best,' but feels very bad to think I am treated so. She says it is hard, and that I am not deserving of it; but I am trying to think I am doing my duty in staying at home and minding him. But for some time past he has been worse than ever, and I am very unhappy. So to-day I thought I would state my case to you and see the result. I have worked very hard for my step-father, early and late and all ways, and retain a good name so far. All my friends advise me to leave home, and at last my mother has consented to let me go, but I think to myself, am I doing right to leave her?" Your step-father is a very unreasonable and cruel man, if he treats you as you say. You are of age, and can do as you please. It will not benefit your mother, for you to submit to his tyranny.

Gertie (Woodlands, Va.) writes: "I am in trouble, and I know you will tell me what to do. I have been engaged to a gentleman for three years, and we never, during that time, had any of what is called lovers' quarrels; but about two months ago he became convinced in some way that I was flirting with him, and now he avoids me as much as possible. Now I love this gentleman as I never can another, and if he still continues in this way, I shall almost wish to die. I have never encouraged any gentleman except him. On the contrary, I have treated all who sought to become his rivals very coldly. I want to know if it would be wrong for me to write to him, protesting my innocence, and tell him I love him as I always have; or should I ask him to come to our house, and let me tell him?" We see no objection to your telling the gentleman the whole truth. If he prizes your affection as he ought to such a good girl's—judging by your letter—all will then be made right, and the shadow of the temporary misunderstanding will disappear.

N. W. Gilbert, (Troy, Mich.,) says: "I often see in the papers of the day allusions to 'Mason and Dixon's line.' Although I have often tried, I never could find out where it is, or what section of the country it is located in. Will you please enlighten us on the subject?" Mason and Dixon's line is a name given to the southern boundary line, separating the State of Pennsylvania from the States of Maryland and Virginia. It was run, with the exception of about twenty-two miles, by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, two English mathematicians and surveyors, between November 15, 1763, and December 26, 1767. During the excited debate in Congress, in 1820, on the Missouri Compromise bill, John Randolph made frequent use of the phrase, "Mason and Dixon's line," and it was caught up as representing the entire boundary between the free and the slave States, and thus gained a proverbial celebrity which it still retains, although slavery has now passed away.

G. I. W. (Camden) says: "Will you be so kind as to answer a question of much importance to me, and which will in some measure affect my future life. I am a young man twenty-one years old, and having a store of my own in one of our growing cities; also a stock of goods valued at $5,000. Now do you think, under the circumstances, I would do right in offering myself to a young lady whom I love very much, and who returns my love. She has always been having everything that she desires, although her parents are not wealthy. Please answer this for one who always takes your pleasing paper." One might have a store and a stock of goods, and not be rich. But if the goods are paid for, and the store is paying, then lose no time in proposing. We hope the lady will be disposed to take you, and that the parents will not oppose, in which case we suppose and hope you will have prosperity and repose.

J. G. B. (Oconomowoc) says: "We wish to ask your opinion in regard to a question of etiquette which has been a subject of discussion between a friend and myself. When a gentleman accompanies a young lady to church, where there is an usher, is it in accordance with the rules of etiquette for the lady to precede the gentleman, or vice versa? By answering the above question through the columns of your paper, you will greatly oblige." There is no rule on the subject. In a crowded aisle the gentleman had better precede the lady; ordinarily the lady may accompany the usher, and precede the gentleman into the pew, so saving two gentlemen pushing against each other in the aisle to let her in. Nowhere does one see so much need for good sense—and so much want of it—as in such places. Perhaps the churches are not very crowded in Oconomowoc.

Georgie (St. Louis) says: "I am an unfortunate woman, and come to you for advice. Will you answer in your corresponding column, and tell who I am? Six months ago I was married, under a name that I gave myself. My parents' name did not suit me, because it was such an outlandish one. The consequence was that I renounced all my name and took another that suited me better. After this I became engaged to marry, in my adopted name. Well, I could not tell my husband that was to be, my real name. Now tell me, am I a wife?" Yes. The change of name does not invalidate your marriage. It was a foolish thing for you to change your name, and it was wrong to conceal what you had done from your husband. You should tell him the truth now. Deception always leads to trouble.

J. M. (Dubuque, Iowa) asks: "In the marriage ceremony, is the bridegroom required to say anything when he puts the ring on the bride's finger? Which finger should it be put on? And is it customary for the bridegroom to kiss the bride as soon as the ceremony is over?" What the bridegroom should do and say depends on the particular ceremony according to which the marriage is performed. Quakers employ no ring. Episcopalians say, "With this ring I thee wed," etc. The wedding ring should be put on the third finger of the left hand. It is customary for the bridegroom to kiss the bride frequently before marriage, at the time, and *occasionally* afterward.

L. A. C. (Monclova) says: "Will you please answer two questions that sorely perplex me? What are sibylline leaves? When is All-Hallow E'en?" Sibylline leaves are leaves of the sibylline books; and the sibylline books were books or documents of prophecies in verse, supposed to contain the fate of the Roman empire, and said to have been purchased by Tarquin the Proud from a sibyl. A sibyl was a woman supposed to be endowed with a spirit of prophecy. Hallow-een is the evening of the thirty-first of October, which precedes All-Hallows; the first day of November being All-Hallows, or All-Saints' Day.

Prothos (Holly Springs, Miss.) says: "Please inform me the date of Cardinal Mazarin's death, and also the fate of that Duke of Buckingham who was supposed to have been killed by a lieutenant in the English story." Cardinal Mazarin died at Vincennes, in France, March 9, 1661. The Duke of Buckingham to whom you refer was assassinated by a discontented subaltern officer, named Felton, August 23, 1628.

M. C. W. (Peoria, Ill.) says: "A young girl placed some money in a savings-bank, and lost her book, and since then the said bank has consolidated with some other. Can you tell her how she can get her money?" A savings-bank has rules applicable to the case of a depositor who has lost her book. See what the rules of the bank in question are, and then proceed accordingly.

Information wants to know if "it is proper to say that a child christened Susie is named after a person whose name is Susan?" Susie is frequently used as the diminutive, pet, or familiar of Susan, and then it stands for the same name. But if a child be christened Susie, then Susie becomes an independent name, and is no more Susan than pie is pan, or tie is tan.

, *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*